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THE GIFT OF

Robert Sadler

# *LIFE AND TIMES*

*OF*

# *GIROLAMO SAVONAROLA.*

T.F
U

LORENZO DI PIETRO DE MEDICI
DETTO PER LE SUE SINGOLARI,
E GRANDI VIRTU IL MAGNIFICO.

nato il dì 2 Gen.° MCDXLVIII. morto il dì 9. Ap.le MCDXCII.

Nicolao Simminettio Patricio et Academico Florentino Clarissimo
Regiique Census Triumviro Vigilantissimo.

Preso da un Busto in terra cotta del Sig.r Gio. Batta Dei Antiquario di S. A. R. e Custode
Giuliano Traballesi del dell'Archivio Segreto di Palazzo Vecchio. Carlo Faucci inc. 1765

# Life and Times

OF

# Girolamo Savonarola

BY

PROFESSOR PASQUALE VILLARI

TRANSLATED BY

LINDA VILLARI

WITH

PORTRAITS AND ILLUSTRATIONS.

VOLUME II.

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# BOOK III.

## *CHAPTERS I.—VI.*

(1495–1497.)

# CHAPTER I.

*CHARLES VIII. RETURNS TO FRANCE — THE ALLIES AID PIERO DE' MEDICI'S ATTEMPT TO RE-ENTER FLORENCE — SAVONAROLA PREACHES AGAINST TYRANNY AND AGAINST THE MEDICI—THE LATTER ARE REPULSED.*

(1495–1496.)

THE altered aspect of Italian affairs was now causing a serious change in the position of Savonarola and the Republic. During the early part of the year the French expedition had been attended by marvellous prosperity; King Charles had reached Naples without encountering obstacles of any kind by the way; the Aragonese had fled; the new kingdom been established as by a stroke of magic. But soon the king's fortunes began to decline as rapidly as they had risen. In a very short time the French had contrived to make themselves equally obnoxious to all the governments and peoples of Italy. Their conduct towards the Florentines cannot be too severely condemned; and everywhere they did nothing but demand money and hold out promises which they never fulfilled.[1] The Neapolitans were so disgusted by their insolence that they were already longing for the return of the Aragonese. The Italian governments felt terror-struck by the might of this foreign host that had traversed all Italy in triumph;

[1] *Vide* Appendix to the Italian edition, doc. xx.

but the most troubled of all was Ludovico the Moor, who had first summoned it across the Alps. He was deeply disquieted by seeing so many Lombard and Genoese exiles accompany the French, was terrified to find his personal enemy, Gian Giacomo Trivulzio, among the king's best and most valued commanders; and now his irritations and suspicions were increased by the refusal of Charles to fulfil the pledge made at the beginning of the war, of granting him the principality of Taranto. Therefore, again a prey to alarm, he was absorbed in weaving fresh schemes. After having summoned France to wreak destruction on Italy, he now resolved to put himself at the head of an Italian league *to drive away the barbarians*. And he succeeded in the attempt! [1]

On the 31st of March, 1495, a League was concluded in Venice between that Republic, the Pope, the Emperor, and the King of Spain. Its ostensible purpose was to defend Christendom against the Turks, maintain the integrity of Italy and the allied States, and gather an army of 34,000 horse and 20,000 foot. But in fact the Sultan was one of the Powers most favourable to the League, and had promised to send men and money to its aid, inasmuch as its real object was to expel the French from Italy.[2] For there were secret clauses to the effect that Spain was to send a fleet to help King Ferdinand to reconquer Naples; the Venetians were to attack the Adriatic coast; the Duke to seize Asti and bar the way against reinforcements from France; while the Emperor and Spain were to attack the French frontiers by land. Thus, with lightning speed, the Moor had on all sides raised up foes against France. King Charles was not ignorant of this. The shrewd French ambassador, Messer

[1] Nardi, Guicciardini, Sismondi, Leo, Commines, &c.

[2] Sismondi, "Hist. des Repub. Ital.," vol. vi. chap. xiii., and the abovementioned authors.

Philippe de Commines, instantly divined the object of the League, and on the very day that it was signed sent off a despatch from Venice to Naples. He then hastened his departure, in order to join the king, whose only means of safety consisted in leaving strong garrisons in Naples, and trying to cut his way back to France with the remainder of his army.

The ambassador made his journey through Tuscany, the only Italian State that, regardless of the promises and threats of the allies, still remained faithful to Charles. As soon as he reached Florence, Commines hastened to St. Mark's. He was anxious to be personally acquainted with Savonarola, and gain an exact idea of the prophet whose fame seemed to fill the whole world. And this skilled judge of human nature came forth from the Friar's cell fired with an intense reverence and admiration to which he frequently recurs in his Memoirs. He had expected to find a remarkable man, but found a marvel instead. His wonder was aroused from the first moment, on hearing the Friar treat of politics with an extraordinary knowledge of men and things. "He spoke of the *Great Assembly* [1] going on in Venice far better than myself, who was just come from it. Then, as every one can see, he has led the purest of lives; his sermons against vice have established good morals in Florence. I have no desire to pass judgment on his revelations, but he certainly predicted to me and to the king things which no one believed at the time, and which have been all fulfilled since. As to his having made use of the confessional, as was asserted by his enemies, for the discovery of State secrets, I declare that I believe him to be an honest man, and that the things he has revealed could never have been told him by any Florentine."

[1] This is the term given by Commines to the gathering of people engaged in the League.

Commines, indeed, felt such complete confidence in Savonarola, that he most urgently pressed him to say whether or no the king could escape from the dangers by which he was beset. Thereupon the Friar took a solemn tone and began to recapitulate the king's broken vows and unredeemed pledges, his disobedience to God's commands, and his abandonment of the great task of reforming Italy and the Church. "These new dangers," he said in conclusion, "are forerunners of the still more severe chastisement by which the king will be scourged, if he return not to obedience to the Lord, and to the way of truth. As regards the present, he will have to fight hard, but will come out victorious in the end." After this strange interview, Commines at once continued his journey to the Neapolitan kingdom.[1]

[1] We subjoin some of the many passages devoted to Savonarola by Commines, since the testimony of a foreign contemporary, and of so keen-witted a man, with a personal knowledge of Savonarola, is specially valuable. "J'ay dit en quelque endroit de cette matière d'Italie, comme il y avoit un frère prescheur . . . renommé de fort saincte vie . . . appellé Frère Hieronyme, qui a dit beaucoup de choses avant qu'elles fussent advenues, comme j'ay desja dit cy-dessus, et tousjours avoit soustenu que le Roy passeroit les monts, . . . *et disoit que le Roy estoit esleu de Dieu pour reformer l'Eglise par force, et chastier les tyrans.* . . . Sa vie estoit la plus belle du monde ainsi qu'il se pouvait voir, et ses sermons preschant contre les vices, et a reduit en icelle cité maintes gens à bien vivre, comme j'ay dit." . . . And in allusion to what was alleged by some against Savonarola's prophecies, namely, that he gave out as divine revelations intelligence secretly acquired from the citizens, Commines remarks:—"Je ne les veux (the enemies of the Friar) point accuser ny excuser. . . . Mais il a dit maintes choses vrayes, que ceux de Florence n'eussent sceu luy avoir dites. Mais touchant le Roy et des maux qu'il dist luy devoir advenir, luy est advenu, ce que vous voyez; qui sceut premier la mort de son filz; puis la sienne, et ay des lettres qu'il escrivoit audit Seigneur" (Commines, "Mémoires," ed. cit., bk. viii. chap. xxvi. pp. 593 and 595). Here is another important passage referring to the author's interview with Savonarola: "J'ay oublié de dire, que moy estant arrivé à Florence, allant au devant du Roy, allay visiter un frère prescheur, appellé frère Hieronyme, demeurant en un convent reformé, homme de saincte vie, comme on disoit, qui quinze ans avoit demeuré audit lieu; et estoit avec moy un Maistre d'hostel du Roy, appellé Jehan François, sage homme. La cause de l'aller voir, fut parce qu'il avoit

Meanwhile Charles VIII. had started from Naples, leaving strong garrisons throughout the kingdom, and taking the rest of the army with him under the command of Trivulzio, in order to fight his way back to France. Reaching Rome on the 1st of June, he hoped to have speech with the Pope; but the latter had fled towards Orvieto the previous day. Alexander Borgia had much reason to fear the anger of the French. He had first of all invited them to Italy; then, being bribed by the Aragonese, had changed sides; when the for-

toujours presché en grande faveur du Roy, et sa parole avoit gardé les Florentins de tourner contre nous; car jamais prescheur n'eut tant de credit en cité. Il avoit tousjours asseuré la venue du Roy (quelque chose qu'on dit ne qu'on escrivit, au contraire); *disant qu'il estoit envoyé de Dieu pour chastier les tyrans d'Italie*, et que rien ne pouvoit resister, ne se defendre contre luy. Avoit dit aussi qu'il viendroit à Pise et qu'il y entreroit, et que ce jour mourroit l'Estat de Florence; et ainsi advint, car Pierre de Medicis fut chassé ce jour. Et maintes autres choses avoit preschées avant qu'elles advinssent, comme la mort de Laurens de Medicis; et aussi disoit publiquement l'avoir par revelation, *et preschoit que l'Estat de l'Eglise seroit reformé à l'espée. Cela n'est pas encore advenu; mais en fut bien prés, et encore le maintient.* Plusieurs le blasmoient de ce qu'il disoit que Dieu luy avoit revelé, autres y ajôustérent foy: de ma part je le repute bon homme. Aussi luy demanday si le Roy pourroit passer sans peril de sa personne, veu la grande assemblée que faisoient les Venitiens, de laquelle il sçavoit mieux parler que moy qui en venois. Il me respondit qu'il auroit affaire en chemin, mais que l'honneur luy en demeureroit, et n'eut il que cent hommes en sa compagnie; et que Dieu qui l'avoit conduit au venir, le conduiroit encores à son retour: *mais pour ne s'estre bien acquitté de la reformation de l'Eglise, comme il devoit, et pour avoir souffert que ses gens pillassent et desrobassent ainsi le peuple, aussi bien ceux de son party, et qui lui ouvroient les portes sans contrainte, comme les ennemis, que Dieu avoit donné une sentence contre luy, et en bref, auroit un coup de foüet.* Mais que je luy disse, que s'il vouloit avoir pitié du peuple, et deliberer en soy de garder ses gens de malfaire, et les punir quand ils le feroient, comme son office le requiert, que Dieu revoqueroit sa sentence ou la diminueroit; et qu'il ne pensast point estre excusé pour dire, je ne fais nul mal. Et me dit que luy mesme iroit au devant du Roy, et luy diroit; et ainsi le fit, et parla de la restitution des places des Florentins. Il me cheut en pensée la mort de Monseigneur le Dauphin, quand il parla de ceste sentence de Dieu, car je ne veis autre chose que le Roy peust prendre à coeur; mais dis encores cecy afin que mieux on entende *que tout cedit voyage fust vray mystere de Dieu*" (Bk. viii. chap. iii. pp. 499–501).

tunes of the French were at their height, he had again joined them ; and now he was once more not only their foe, but one of the main contrivers of the League. Besides all this a singular fact had occurred, thoroughly characteristic of the Borgia and his times. On the first passage of the French through Rome, Prince Djem, brother of the Grand Turk Bajazet II., was a prisoner in the city. He was a spirited youth, thoroughly Eastern in appearance and temperament, was devoted to music and poetry, was very popular, and had contested his brother's throne with some chance of success. But being driven by adversity to take refuge in the Isle of Rhodes, he had there been captured by the Grand Master of the Order, and consigned by him to Pope Innocent VIII. On the latter's death he had fallen into the power of Alexander Borgia, who retained him as a very precious hostage. The Sultan, in fact, so greatly dreaded his brother's release, that he allowed the Pope 40,000 ducats yearly for his maintenance, and frequently offered still larger sums for his murder. Accordingly, when passing through Rome, King Charles immediately asked the Pope's permission to carry off Prince Djem, saying that he would be useful to him in the campaign against the Sultan. Alexander reluctantly consented, and was also obliged to yield him his son Cesare (later Duke of Valentinois), and although the latter was nominally sent as an ambassador, and treated with suitable respect, in reality both he and the prince were hostages in the king's hands against the fickleness of the Pope. Suddenly, however, Cesare made his escape from the camp, and a few days later the youthful Djem unexpectedly expired. Some said that the Pope had given the latter a dose of slow poison before consigning him to the king ; but others declared that Cesare had administered the drug by his orders. However this

may have been, it is certain that the Sultan had written to the Pope a short time before, promising him 300,000 ducats and his permanent alliance on receipt of his brother's corpse.[1]

But although Charles had so much cause for resentment, this was no moment to halt in Rome, nor to think of revenge. He therefore continued his journey, and entered Siena on the 13th of June. The news of this event roused incredible excitement among the Florentines, who now held Charles in detestation. They still adhered to the terms of their treaty, but could not forgive him for having broken faith with them, violated his engagements, and encouraged the revolt of Pisa. The king had done nothing but make repeated demands for money, always promising to give up the fortresses, and compel the Pisans to surrender, but leaving both pledges unfulfilled. Accordingly, despite all their efforts, the Florentines were in a state of increasing peril. They had sent their most courageous young citizens to the field under the command of Piero Capponi; they had engaged Ercole Bentivoglio and other captains; but the Pisans were constantly receïving reinforcements from Genoa, Siena, Milan, and even

[1] The letters of the Pope and the Sultan are given in Burchart's Diary, and have been published in French by Mons. De Cherrier, vol. i. p. 416 and fol. They are also reproduced in Sanuto's Chronicles "La Spedizione di Carlo VIII." p. 45 and fol. De Cherrier gives the Pope's letter to the ambassador, and Sanuto a very short one addressed to the Sultan, while both give a very explicit epistle from the latter conceived in the following terms: "It were well that the said Djem our brother, who in any case is exposed to death, and in danger of being removed from the hands of your Greatness, should be speedily put to death, the which would be life to him, bring profit and tranquillity to your Potency, and be of great satisfaction to ourselves. . . . Wherefore if your Potency will compass the same and send his (Djem's) body to any place on our coasts, I, the forementioned Sultan Bajazeth Khan, promise to despatch to any spot named by your Greatness three hundred thousand gold ducats, so that your Potency may use them to purchase lands for your sons." . . . This is the translation given by Sanuto (p. 46), and differing very little from the Latin epistle given in Burchart.

from Charles himself. When the Florentine ambassadors reminded the latter of his pledges, he replied: "But what can I do if your Signory discontent all their subjects?" And he afterwards sent the Pisans over six hundred Swiss and Gascon foot soldiers, who were of great assistance to them in the war.[1] In this way rebellion was encouraged throughout the territories of the Republic. At the same time, on the 26th of May, Montepulciano gave itself to the Sienese, who immediately occupied its fortress. And now, with things in this state, the king was drawing near, and, what was still more alarming, with Piero de' Medici in his train!

No sooner was this known in Florence than all flew to arms. And, as the historian, Jacopo Nardi, relates, it was marvellous to see how rapidly men and boys took up arms, and how private citizens competed with the Commissioners of the Signory in stocking the city with weapons and supplies. In a surprisingly short time eleven thousand foot cuirassiers were collected from the outlying villages; every householder in Florence had gathered together his friends and domestics; all the towers were furnished with missiles, all the gates barred, many of the streets barricaded, and the Gonfaloniers of the Companies kept guard over the city by night, no foreign soldiers being allowed admittance at this time.[2]

And all these preparations were the work of the Piagnoni, whom the Arrabbiati declared to be only fit to mumble Paters and Aves. It is true that they never neglected the services of the church; that they held

[1] Sismondi, "Histoire des Républiques Italiennes"; Michelet, "Renaissance"; Leo; Guicciardini, "Storia d'Italia"; Nardi, &c. French historians are no less severe than Italian in condemning the conduct of Charles VIII. to the Florentine Republic.

[2] The city was in a state of great suspense, "with much fortifying of houses and supplying of arms." So Luca Landucci tells us in his "Diario Fiorentino," p. 106. See also Nardi, and other contemporary Florentine historians of the period.

public prayers, gave large sums in charity, and carried the Madonna dell' Impruneta in solemn procession; but those most zealous in devotion were also the readiest to bear arms. And Savonarola, who was then continuing his course of sermons on the Psalms, always cried from the pulpit, "Be instant in prayer, but neglect no human precaution; help yourselves in all ways and by all means, and then the Lord will be with ye. Have courage, my brethren, and above all preserve union! If ye will all be united and agreed in one purpose, victory shall be yours, even if all the world be against ye. Be not terrified by present events, for we are hardly at the beginning of the game. Ye will pass through terrible times, ye will see enemies on all sides, ye will hear that they are in Rome, in this or that quarter, and here close upon ye. And then alas for Florence! Alas for Italy! Be united, therefore, among yourselves, united in the Lord, for the righteous shall conquer." [1]

Meanwhile the first ambassadors [2] sent by the Republic to King Charles in Siena obtained nothing but rough replies from him. They begged to know by which road he intended to march, in order to furnish it with the necessary supplies; and his answer was, "Furnish your whole territory." He was highly indignant to find that Florence had flown to arms, as at the approach of a foe. And the ambassadors, on their side, finding Piero de' Medici in the camp, and fearing that the king purposed to reinstate him in Florence, expressed themselves with more daring than diplomacy, so that both parties were increasingly irritated, and there was no hope of coming to a friendly arrangement, unless some one of great weight and firmness could be persuaded to intervene. Again, with

[1] Predica xviii., "sopra i Salmi."

[2] These ambassadors were Domenico Bonsi, Giuliano Salviati, Andrea dei Pazzi. *Vide* Desjardins, "Négociations," &c., vol. i. p. 613 and fol.

one accord, all turned to Savonarola for help. He alone was capable of taking a firm, imperative tone with the king without exciting his wrath; for Charles had an almost superstitious respect for him, and had kept up a continual correspondence with him, by letters, of which the tenour was known to all. In fact, one of these epistles had been intercepted and published by Savonarola's enemies, in order to stir the wrath of the League against him; but it had produced the contrary result of increasing his popularity, inasmuch as its terms were to this effect: "Most Christian Sire,—It is the Lord's will that the Florentines should remain allied with your Majesty; but He wills that your protection should serve to extend their freedom, not the power of any individual citizen; forasmuch as the Divine Providence hath ordained and decided the overthrow of all tyrants. The Lord will inflict terrible chastisements on those private citizens who should seek to usurp, as in the past, the rule of this flourishing Republic; forasmnch as the present new popular government of the State hath been constituted by God and not by man; and He hath chosen this city in order to magnify it, and hath filled it with His servants, and he that would touch it would touch the pupil of His eye. Wherefore, O Sire, if you will not obey Him by maintaining your pledges to the Florentines, and restoring their fortresses, many adversities shall come upon you, and the nations shall rise against you." [1]

[1] This was dated 21st May, 1496, and was published with many blunders and alterations, of which Savonarola himself complained in his sermon of the 28th of July of the same year: "This letter that I wrote to the King of France hath been printed without understanding, and is full of errors." A copy of the printed version (undated) is comprised in the Guicciardini collection, now preserved in the National Library of Florence. There is a less incorrect copy in the Riccardi Library, codex 2,053. *Vide* Appendix to the Italian edition, doc. xxi. As still better evidence of the general belief that the descent of Charles VIII. was predestined by heaven, we may give a few passages of an oration

Certainly, he who was capable of writing to the king in these terms was the man best fitted to address him at this juncture and save the Republic from its pressing dangers. Accordingly, at Poggibonsi, in June, 1496, Charles VIII. was again confronted by Savonarola. The latter assumed his commanding, prophetic tone, and repeated by word of mouth all that he had already expressed in writing. The king was reminded that he was now returning to his own country almost as a fugitive, that the new perils in which he was involved had been already foretold to him in Florence, and repeated by letter: "Most Christian Prince," continued Savonarola, "thou hast provoked the Lord to anger by breaking faith with the Florentines, by forsaking the task of reforming the Church, that the Lord had so often announced to thee by my lips, and for which He had chosen thee by such manifest signs. Thou wilt escape from the present dangers; but shouldst thou fail to resume thy abandoned task, shouldst thou fail to obey the commands which the Lord once more repeateth to thee by the voice of His poor servant, I tell thee that still heavier woes shall be poured on thee by His wrath, and that another shall be chosen in thy stead." [1]

addressed to the king in 1494 by Marsilio Ficino: "Veri namque simile est et Christianissimum Gallorum Regem a Christi mitti, et Carolum, præ ceteris insignem pietate Regem, christiana pietate duci; præsertim cum iter opusque tantum ea mente sis agressus, ut sanctam Jerusalem sævissimis barbaris occupatam, summo humani generis Redemptori denique redimas. . . . Benedictus qui venit in nomine Domini, Carolus charus nobis, excelsus, rex pacificus. Hæc est dies quam fecit Dominus, exultemus et lætemur in ea." . . . Ficino goes on in a still more exaggerated strain of eulogy, reprehensible enough from any man's lips. And in the case of one who might be said to be a creature of the Medici, and who, after extolling Savonarola in this fashion, subsequently turned against him, it excites particular disgust. *Vide* "Oratio Marsilii Ficini ad Carolum Magnum Gallorum Regem, Ficini Opera," the forementioned edition, vol. i. pp. 960–61.

[1] This legation is mentioned by Nardi and all the other historians; also in the "Vita Latina," sheet 20; in Burlamacchi, p. 73 and fol. *Vide* Appendix to the Italian edition, doc. xxii. De Cherrier (ii. 199) says that Savonarola was escorted on this embassy by fifty citizens, but

The king appeared almost terror-struck by this language, and instantly continuing his journey towards Pisa, begged Savonarola to bear him company thither. But the latter after having held a second interview with him at Castel Fiorentino, decided to turn back, for fear of being captured by the enemies of Florence. On the 21st of June he announced from his pulpit that the threatened danger was once more averted, and made this the text for fresh exhortations in favour of godly living, concord, and free government.[1]

Meanwhile the king had entered Pisa in triumph. The citizens placed all their finest mansions at his disposal, the ladies stripped themselves of all their jewels to present them to Charles and his Barons, in order, by thus satiating his avarice, to keep him on their side. All this formed a strong contrast with the surly behaviour of the Florentines. Charles was already well disposed towards the Pisans in consequence of these signs of affection, when, one day, as he issued from church after Mass, he was met by a procession of all the fairest women of Pisa, robed in black, with loosened hair, bare feet, and ropes about their necks,

this is a blunder, and quotes the Register 471 (instead of 47) of class III (instead of class iii.), which, however, makes no mention of so numerous a following. Commines also speaks of Savonarola's different missions, and frequently repeats the gist of the Friar's letters and speeches to the king. Seeing the real weight of the chronicler's testimony, we may be allowed to quote some other passages from his Memoirs. "Il a tousjours presché publiquement que le Roy retourneroit de rechef en Italie *pour accomplir cette commission que Dieu luy avoit donnée, qui estoit de reformer l'Eglise par l'espée, et de chasser les tyrans d'Italie, et que au cas qu'il ne le fit, Dieu le puniroit cruellement* et tous ses sermons premiers et ceux de present, il les a fait imprimer, et se vendent. Cette menace qu'il faisoit au Roy . . . luy a plusieurs fois escrite le dit Hieronyme, peu de temps avont son trespas, et ainsi le ma dit de bouche ledict Hieronyme, quand je parlay à luy (que fut au retour d'Italie), en me disant que la sentence estoit donnée contre le Roy au ciel, au cas qu'il n' accomplit ce que Dieu luy avoit ordonné" (Commines, "Mémoires," ed. cit., bk. viii. chap. xxvi. pp. 593, 594).

[1] Predica xxv., "sopra i Salmi."

in token of their detested subjection to Florence, who all cried aloud to him to restore their freedom. The whole population gathered round and joined in their supplications, and Charles and his captains seemed much moved by the scene. The Barons were assembled in council, and for a moment it was seriously proposed to assist the Pisans; but this plan, like all the rest, was afterwards abandoned. The king neither gave liberty to the Pisans, nor yielded up the fortresses of the Florentines, and, regardless of his recent promises to Savonarola, continued his march with his army by way of Lucca and Pontremoli. At Fornovo, on the river Taro, he encountered the allied troops, who considerably outnumbered his force of 1,000 men. A pitched battle took place on the 6th of July, and there was afterwards much dispute as to which side had won the victory. It is certain that the French succeeded in their purpose of forcing a passage, and that the allies tried in vain to drive them back. Charles VIII. halted at Asti on his march, again indulged there in pleasure, and then slowly pursued his way to France. On the 7th of July Ferdinand II. of Aragon made his entry into Naples, and after re-establishing his fallen government met with no further opposition excepting from the few garrisons scattered through the kingdom, which were still holding out without any hope of reinforcement or support. Thus, in less than the space of one year, the French had twice traversed the length and breadth of Italy, easily conquering and easily conquered, disgusting friends and enemies alike, and leaving behind them sad memorials of their falsity and greed.[1]

Their attitude towards Florence remained unaltered. Whether it was that their captain in command of the castle of Pisa had secret orders from the king, differing from those openly sent, or whether, as was said by some,

[1] Guicciardini, Nardi, Cerretani, Parenti, Commines, Sismondi, Leo, Michelet.

he had fallen in love with a Pisan lady, it is certain that he never surrendered the fortresses. And on one occasion, when the Florentines, after a skirmish, pursued the Pisan troops almost to St. Mark's Gate, he actually opened fire on them from the walls, and killed several of their men. The Republic made this the subject of repeated remonstrance, despatched successive embassies and more money to the king, and even promised to succour his scattered garrisons in the kingdom of Naples; but all was in vain. Yet, in the month of September, Messer Niccolò Alamanni at last returned from France with special orders from the king to his officers and men, enjoining them to yield the fortresses and relinquish the subsidies furnished by Pisa. Instead of obeying this decree the French commandants sold the fortress of Pisa to the citizens for 14,000 florins in January, 1496, and received 10,000 more in payment of the artillery they left behind. The fortresses of Sarzana and Sarzanello were sold to the Genoese for 20,000 florins; that of Pietrasanta to the Lucchese for 30,000; and that of Leghorn was the only one restored to the Florentines.[1]

[1] *Vide* the above-mentioned writers. How deeply these insults were resented by the people of Florence is proved by the following extract from Rinuccini's "Ricordi Storici," p. clix.: "On the 2nd of January (*Florentine style*) news was received in Florence that the French commandant, who held the new citadel for that barbarous traitor and assassin, Charles VIII., the unworthy King of France, had given up and consigned the said citadel to the Pisan citizens, who were then governing independently, although he (the king) had repeatedly sworn by oaths and double treaties with his hand on the sacred stone and before the altar of Santa Maria del Fiore, to restore the said citadel to the Florentines, . . . the which was an act of treason of a barbarian, who was a worse traitor than Judas and Ganellone di Pontieri, inasmuch as we were leagued and confederated with him, and although by holding out false hopes and frequently promising to give it up, he and his murdering ministers together had cheated us out of more than three hundred thousand florins, and we trusted in his disloyalty and perfidy, the which was more like unto treason than was ever heard before, and similar to that related of Gano (Jehan) of Mainz, who at least was not a king."

Nevertheless, the departure of the French from Italy greatly increased the insecurity of Florence. The allies being no longer threatened from other quarters were now free to turn their arms against that Republic. Entertaining a mortal hatred for the new government, they determined to punish its fidelity to France and its refusal to join the League which, as they pretended, had been formed on purpose to free Italy from the barbarians. Accordingly Florence was now in the gravest danger, and, with so many powerful enemies arrayed against her, placed her only hope in the discord prevailing amongst them. For whereas the Pope and Venice desired the reinstatement of Piero de' Medici, Duke Ludovico, while ostensibly favouring the plan, had a personal dislike for Piero, and having come to an understanding with the Arrabbiati, and nourishing some distant hope of one day subjecting the Republic to his own rule, was trying meanwhile to ensnare it by secret and deceptive advances.[1] However the allies concurred for the moment in encouraging Piero de' Medici to collect men and money for an attempt upon Florence, and, as may well be imagined, he promptly began his preparations. Although already bankrupt in purse and credit, yet he contrived by a desperate effort to scrape together 10,000 ducats and gave them to Virginio Orsini for the hire of his former troops. Orsini, who had ignominiously fled from the French camp at the battle of the Taro, threw himself heartily into the undertaking for the sake of retrieving his military reputation. It was arranged that when he and Piero advanced upon Florence, Giovanni Bentivoglio, the hired general of Ludovico and Venice, was to simultaneously invade the Republic from the Bolognese frontier; while Caterina Sforza, the ruler of Imola and Forlì, was to despatch troops from another

[1] *Vide* Desjardins, vol. i. pp. 657–58, letter and notes dated the 17th of May. De Cherrier, vol. ii. p. 345.

point. Siena and Perugia had also promised to send strong contingents. Accordingly the fallen tyrant's expedition seemed to have every chance of success. But once begun, the aspect of affairs quickly changed. Piero and Orsini approached the confines of the Republic by easy stages, always expecting to be overtaken by promised contingents which never arrived, and thus both time and money were wasted.

While the Mediceans were taking things so coolly, the citizens of Florence had been stirred by Savonarola to the most energetic efforts. The Friar had kept silence for some time, on account of the growing ill-feeling against him in Rome, of which more will be said in the ensuing chapter. But on withdrawing from the pulpit, he had announced that grave dangers were overhanging the city, and had caused the law against Parliaments to be carried, that was to be the safeguard of its freedom. Now that the dangers foretold by him had really come to pass, his name instantly rose into new favour, and his daring was increased. Throwing aside all personal considerations, he reappeared in the pulpit on the 11th of October, to encourage the citizens and rouse them to the defence of their country. The first part of his sermon was entirely on religion: "The life of man, O my brethren," he said, "is a continual struggle upon earth; especially for the true Christian, inasmuch as he hath to fight against all hindrances to the spirit. He wars against the world, the flesh, and the devil, and is continually fighting. Thus it was with the apostles and martyrs, thus will it ever be with good Christians. God willeth it for their greater glory in the life to come. Wherefore marvel ye not if in announcing new things we meet with so many contradictions. To me it is a marvel that they be no greater. And inasmuch as it behooves us to fight, we have now returned to the camp, to put a little

order in our disarrayed forces and equip them for a new campaign. We have two things to do: first, to fight and that unceasingly and to the death; and secondly, to conquer, for the cause of Christ is bound to have victory. Fear not, for in the end the victory will be ours; and if I were to die, this cause would still be even as the Hydra of the poet, the which, when one of its heads is cut off, shooteth forth seven others." Continuing in the same strain, the Friar then turned his discourse from religion to politics, and began with ironical remarks on those who spoke ill of the new government. "Magnificent Signori, whenever ye have some difficult business on hand, I would have ye call one of these chatterers and say to him:—Tell me now, what is to be done concerning this matter? And if that man should know what to say, I would forfeit my mantle. You will see that either he will know not what to reply, or will speak some gross folly. And then take ye a peck of birdseed and say to that man: Come, take this and go feed the fowls, but leave State business alone." [1]

The sermon went on a little longer in this tone of burlesque; but when Savonarola at last broached the grave and important question of the day, his language changed and became terribly earnest. He will have no half measures when the country is in danger. In church, in the pulpit, crucifix in hand, he openly and loudly counsels the citizens to put to death all who seek to re-establish tyranny and reinstate the Medici in Florence. "One must treat these men as the Romans treated those who sought the recall of Tarquinius. Thou that respecteth not Christ, wilt thou respect private citizens? Do justice, I tell thee. *Cut off his head, were he even the chief and*

[1] This passage occurs in the last but three of the "Prediche sui Salmi" collected by Violi, who dated it 11th of October. It was also printed separately with the date of the 10th.

*head front of thy house; cut off his head!* Remember the law that hath been made against Parliaments! Teach it to thy children, write it in all places. Thou must trust in nought but in this Great Council of ours, which is the work of God and not of men; and let all who would change it, or play the tyrant, or establish a government of private citizens, be accursed of the Lord for ever and ever." He then exhorted his hearers to show energy, courage, and determination in adopting necessary measures; since "he that hopeth for help from Heaven without helping himself, tempteth his Lord." He repeated this advice with similar energy on the 18th and 25th of the same month; and only when assured that the courage of the people had revived did he again lapse into the silence now imposed upon him by causes which will presently be described.

It was not long before the effect of these sermons was seen. Four days after the delivery of the first an enactment was passed, again setting a price on the Medici's heads, and that was virtually an almost general summons to arms. It ran pretty much as follows: "Seeing that Piero de' Medici, in his tyrannical greed, hath made many attempts against the liberty of Florence, the Eight of *Guardia e Balìa* do now declare him a rebel; wherefore, in virtue of the statutes, he may be killed with impunity. And inasmuch as he is seen to persevere in his evil intent, by stirring against this city not only many Roman Barons, but the Supreme Pontiff, and almost all the potentates of Italy, hoping by their favour to crush your liberty, usurp your revenues, violate your women and maidens, and resume the course of tyranny with which he and his ancestors so long oppressed your city, it hath been decreed by the said *Signori, Otto di Guardia e Balìa*, that whoever kills the said Piero de' Medici, who seeks to destroy our liberty, shall receive a reward of 4,000 broad florins of

gold."[1] Later a reward of 2,000 florins was likewise offered for the head of Giuliano de' Medici;[2] and officials were appointed to administer their property in the interests of the Republic.[3]

But this was not enough, nor did the Florentine people stop here. Savonarola's sermons had roused both Arrabbiati and Piagnoni to arms, in their common hatred to the Medici, and Piero's approach excited either party to equal fear and indignation. Prompt and efficacious measures were accordingly taken. The war with Pisa was at once suspended, barely 2,000 foot and 300 men-at-arms being left in the camp. And 1,000 foot soldiers and 200 men-at-arms were despatched to the neighbourhood of Cortona as a check upon the enemy supposed to be advancing on that side. At the same time a body of 1,500 foot and 300 men-at-arms was encamped near the Sienese border, to prevent the forces of that State from joining the Mediceans. Thus Piero found himself practically surrounded on all sides. He lingered inactively between Tavernelle and Panicale, awaiting promised contingents which never arrived. His purse being exhausted by this delay, his army dispersed, and even Virginio Orsini marched away. Thus Piero's expedition ended in smoke. He was left in the field with a mere handful of men, had reaped nothing but failure and mortification, and given the last blow to his exhausted credit. Accordingly he was compelled to take flight, and, groaning over the broken faith and false promises of the allies, strayed back to Rome to seek refuge at the Court or with his friends.[4]

[1] Provision of the Greater Council passed on the 15th of October, 1495; in the Florence Archives, "Provvisioni," Registro 187, at sheet 120.

[2] "Provvisione" of the 26th of November, 1495. Ibid., sheet 142.

[3] "Provvisione" of the 19th of December, 1495. Ibid., sheet 157.

[4] Besides contemporary historians, see also Varchi, i. 94–95; Ammirato bk. xxvi. (at the close).

Meanwhile the Florentines, rejoicing at the dispersal of the threatened storm, again despatched their forces to Pisa, and felt growing distrust in the League, which, as was now clearly seen, under pretence of saving Italy, only sought to crush the Republic.

# CHAPTER II.

*THE POPE ISSUES A BRIEF SUMMONING SAVONAROLA TO ROME. HIS REPLY. ANOTHER BRIEF PROHIBITS HIM FROM PREACHING, BUT THE TEN PROCURE ITS TACIT REVOCATION. A CARDINAL'S HAT IS OFFERED TO SAVONAROLA, BUT HE REFUSES TO ACCEPT IT.*

(1495–1496.)

THE hatred of the Arrabbiati and Frateschi against Piero de' Medici was the real cause of the failure of his expedition; for had the allies been really determined to help him, the city of Florence could scarcely have withstood their attack. Hence the ill-success of the enterprise may be chiefly attributed to the lack of harmony between the members of the League. Duke Ludovico had never forgotten the insults he had received from Piero de' Medici; and although the latter was now lavish in protestations of friendship and respect, had resolved to prevent his reinstatement in Florence. Besides, he was now reconciled with the Arrabbiati who had succeeded in rousing his violent irritation against Savonarola by giving him to understand that the Friar made direct allusion to him, and actually mentioned him by name in his sermons against the vices of Italian potentates and in his descriptions of tyrants. Accordingly, Ludovico had long joined in their schemes for

Savonarola's overthrow.[1] In this way the Arrabbiati were able to carry out their purpose of covertly attacking the popular government, while Ludovico, by persecuting a Friar who was opposed to him, made fresh friends in Florence, and improved his chances of gaining a foothold there in the future. To this end his orator, Paolo Somenzi, sojourned in the city, and, as we shall see, almost acted the part of a spy and provocative agent (*agente provocatore*), receiving efficacious assistance from his colleague, Francesco Tranchedino, the Milanese orator at Bologna.[2]

As regarded the rest of the allies, the Venetians objected

[1] Pitti, in his "Storia di Firenze," says: "For the which reason his (Savonarola's) enemies were more submissive than ever to the Duke of Milan, who, being desirous of restricting the power of the Government, with their help, had already, in the year 1495, at their instance, obtained briefs from Rome, through his brother, the Cardinal, to prohibit the Friar from preaching" ("Arch. Stor. Ital.," vol. i. p. 50). Nardi frequently dwells on the intrigues of the Arrabbiati. At p. 88 of vol. i. he says: "Nevertheless many of the leading citizens being ill-content with this form of government, they, while dissimulating their real motive, cunningly opposed the above-mentioned Frà Girolamo, since he had helped to establish it, and at the same time the Pope, incited thereunto by certain citizens and ecclesiastics, once more summoned the Friar to Rome," &c. Almost identical statements are to be found in Guicciardini's "Storia d'Italia" and "Storia di Firenze." But one of Savonarola's letters to the Moor, and those of the latter's envoys and spies, throw a still stronger light on the fact, that the persecutions directed against the Friar originated in political rather than religious causes.

[2] The letters of Somenzi and Tranchedino were often quoted and some published in the first (Italian) edition of this work. Many others were subsequently published by Prof. Del Lungo in the "Arch. Storico Ital.," New Series, vol. xviii. part i. p. 2 and fol. Nevertheless much of the correspondence is still inedited, and some of the letters will be mentioned and others given *in extenso* farther on. On the 27th of January, 1495, Somenzi wrote that the Friar was persisting "in his abominable tendencies and deeds. For the which reason I am making some efforts to rouse this people to enmity against him." And on the 8th of February he added: "So far the practices against the Friar have gone well, and I hope they will have the good result that is desired." But on the 18th of March he was obliged to write: "It is thought that these Florentines will end by coming to blows amongst themselves; but in that case I believe the Friar's party will have the best of it, inasmuch as two-thirds of the people are on the Friar's side" (Del Lungo, loc. cit., doc. i.–iii.).

to these secret arrangements and machinations on the part of the Milanese Duke, and continued favourable to Piero de' Medici ; but they were the only power decidedly inclined to reinstate him in Florence. Even the Pope himself was very cold upon this point, since his chief purpose was the aggrandisement of his own offspring; hence he too secretly yearned to fix his rapacious claws on the Florentine Republic, and had no sympathy to spare for any other object. It was therefore easy for the Arrabbiati and the Duke of Milan to obtain his co-operation in the deadly war they had planned against Savonarola; and having once kindled the ire of so tenacious a hater, their designs advanced rapidly to fulfilment.

At first, as we have said before, Alexander had no special reason to hate Savonarola; but when, early in 1495, he began to receive letters from Florence and Milan, describing the Friar as an audacious denouncer of the clergy and the Pope ; when altered, exaggerated, and falsified versions of the Friar's discourses—already daring enough in their genuine form—were placed before his eyes; and when he was told that the Prior of St. Mark's was the sole support of the popular party, sole author of the popular hatred to the Medici and the League, Alexander's anger was roused and soon burst into flame. Cardinal Ascanio Sforza, brother to Ludovico, and his chief agent in Rome,[1] was he who blew most dexterously on this flame, from the moment that it was first kindled. Another of Savonarola's worst enemies was now in Rome, *i.e.*, the preaching Friar, Mariano da Genazzano, who had never forgiven the shameful defeat he had endured in Florence. He was one of the most active conspirators in favour of the Medici and against Savonarola, whom he assailed with the foulest calumnies. He always spoke of him as "*The*

[1] *Vide* at doc. vii. of Prof. Del Lungo's work (above quoted), the letter from Ascanio Sforza, dated 15th of April, 1496.

*Devil's Instrument*," [1] and maliciously harped upon all his invectives against the evil life of the clergy, and all his declarations of intending to go farther and speak more frankly at any risk. The Borgia dissimulated his anger on this head; but in reality it wrought him to fury. Rumours were already afloat concerning scandals of a kind that history often shrinks from recording, and it was openly asserted that another son had been, or was just about to be, born to the already aged Pope, and that this would be his sixth or seventh child.[2] Accordingly we may imagine with what feelings he must have regarded the monk who inculcated morality from the pulpit, and fearlessly thundered against all transgressors.

The Borgia now set to work with characteristic astuteness. On the 25th of July, 1495, he addressed Savonarola in a brief of the mildest description, conceived in these terms: "To our well-beloved son, greeting and the apostolic benediction. We have heard that of all the workers in the Lord's vineyard, thou art the most zealous; at the which we deeply rejoice, and give thanks to the Almighty God.[3] We have likewise heard that thou dost assert that thy predictions of the future proceed not from thee but from God; wherefore we desire, as behooves our pastoral office, to have speech with thee concerning these things; so that being, by thy means, better informed of God's will, we may be the better able to fulfil it.[4] Wherefore, by thy vow of holy obedience, we enjoin thee to wait

[1] Further on we shall have to speak in detail of Frà Mariano's intrigues.

[2] Even the "Civiltà Cattolica" (the renowned Papal organ) is forced to acknowledge—in its issue of the 15th of March, 1873—that this sixth or seventh child (Giovanni) really existed during the reign of Alexander VI., between 1494 and 1499.

[3] "Inter ceteros vineæ Domini Sabaoth operarios te plurimum laborare, multorum relatu percipimus. De quo valde laetamur," &c.

[4] "Ut quod placitum est Deo, melius per te cognoscentes, peragamus," &c.

on us without delay, and shall welcome thee with loving-kindness." [1]

The subtle craft dictating this brief is shown by the way in which it appeals to Savonarola's sincerity, which was in truth of the greatest. But the character of the Borgian Pope was too well known to all men, and the Florentines were too keenly awake to the plots of the Arrabbiati, who had already attempted Savonarola's life by steel and poison, and now openly boasted of their friendship with Rome. Hence no one was deceived as to the purport of this extraordinarily gentle summons. All saw that the Pope designed either to have him murdered by the way, or, should that plan fail, to seize him and put him to death in the dungeons of Castle St. Angelo.[2] Consequently his friends hastened to beseech him not to stir from Florence, where his presence was more indispensable than ever, now that the departure of the French had brought so many fresh dangers on the Republic. The dilemma was one of serious difficulty for Savonarola; he had either to disobey the Pope's mandate, or risk falling a prey to his wrath and that of the Arrabbiati, who hoped to destroy the popular government by its preacher's death. At this moment he was only just recovering from a serious intestinal disturbance, by which his strength had been so much exhausted that, according to the physician's dictum, his life was in danger unless he would abstain from all preaching and study. A few days before he had already announced this to the people, saying that illness compelled him to suspend

[1] Both this brief and Savonarola's reply to the same were very incorrectly printed. We have restored them to their true reading. *Vide* Appendix to the Italian edition, doc. xxiii. and xxiv.

[2] As, at a later period, Clement VII. treated Benedetto da Foiano, a brother of St. Mark's, who, by preaching Savonarola's doctrines during the siege of Florence (1529–30), had roused the people to fight for their freedom. On going to Rome this Friar was starved to death in one of the subterranean dungeons of Castle St. Angelo.

his sermons.[1] And indeed his exhaustion was written in his face, and all saw that he was barely able to mount the pulpit stairs. It is true that, on facing the people and beginning to speak, his vigour revived and made him appear even stronger and more impassioned than before. But this was merely a passing and almost fictitious excitement, frequently followed by a reaction costing him many days of utter prostration. He therefore decided to entirely abandon the pulpit and at the same time to submit to the Pope the just and well-founded reasons compelling him to delay his departure. But first of all he determined to bid his hearers farewell and give them the advice required in the present state of affairs. He foresaw the dangers overhanging the Republic, perceiving that it was not only imperative to be on the alert against the Arrabbiati, but likewise against the Medici, who were all the more dangerous because they were less feared.

Accordingly, on the 28th of July, he delivered one of his terrible sermons. The Signory and all the magistrates attended Mass in the Duomo that day, and Savonarola mounted the pulpit in a mood of profound sadness. He had to forsake his flock at a moment when the departure and treachery of King Charles had brought new perils on Florence; when his enemies were making war upon him, so that his overthrow might lead to that of the Republic, and had dexterously contrived to convert the Pope into an instrument of their party strife. But if the Republic was to be assailed in his person, Savonarola saw very plainly that in defending himself he defended the whole people. Therefore, although almost too feeble to drag himself into the pulpit, once in sight of his flock, he looked on the expectant throng and felt braced to renewed effort.

[1] "Prediche sopra i Salmi." Sermon xxiii. (delivered on the 24th of June), xxiv. (5th of July), xxv. (12th of July).

He began by speaking of the corrupt habits and scandals still prevailing in Florence. Gamblers, blasphemers, loose women, and other persons dedicated to unmentionable vices, still polluted the city by their presence. They had grown more reckless since the persecution of the Friar had begun, what might they not become when he was reduced to silence? Hence Savonarola did not spare them on this occasion. He urged the authorities to chastise them severely, even by death, if their practices could be checked in no other way. He reminded his hearers how, in consequence of Achan's sin, the wrath of God had been poured out on the whole Hebrew people, and could only be appeased by the death of the culprit. "Take heed, therefore, Florence, thou that wouldst be so pitiful, see in what way the Lord wrought! Art thou wiser than God? Art thou more merciful than God? Art thou more than God, thou? O Florence! thou wouldst be more clement than God; but thy clemency is madness, thy pity is cruel; do justice, I tell thee, on these nefarious crimes.[1] I tell thee, the Almighty God demands justice; it behooves thee to arise and seize one of these men and lead him forth and cry: this man deserves death. Otherwise, ye and your city will be endangered. Renounce dancing, renounce gambling, close the taverns. I tell thee, O Florence, now is the time to weep, not to make merry." These threats, however, were only uttered in order to terrify the people, since, in spite of his profound hatred for every form of vice, Savonarola never practically forsook his natural moderation, although often indulging in undue vehemence of speech.

He next turned to the subject of prophecy, declaring it

[1] Both in this and other sermons Savonarola alludes to unnatural vices, then very prevalent in Florence, where philosophers and literati were accustomed to speak of them with cynical mirth, and quote the example of the ancient Greeks.

to be needful to the salvation of the people and the Church, "the which is now made desolate by the corruption of its rulers and the lack of good preachers. The honest preacher should be ready to give his life for truth's sake, and to save his people; but where now are such preachers to be found? I tell thee that so long as matters proceed in this fashion, the Church will sink to lower depths of ruin, and Italy will have no respite. As I have already said unto ye, O clergy, ye have given birth to this tempest."

Again changing his theme, he then turned to politics. "To four things have I exhorted ye: To the fear of God, to peace, to the public welfare, and to the reform of the government, *i.e.*, to the Greater Council; now I have only to insist on these same." And thus, examining all subjects in turn, he drove them home by new arguments. Above all he urged the necessity of union, and suggested the appointment of officers of peace, "who should put an end to these names of *Bigi*, *Bianchi*, and *Arrabbiati*, which are the ruin of the city. . . . At all events, let the construction of the Council-hall be hurried forward, employing on it, if needful, the artificers of the Duomo, since their labour will be the most pleasing to the Lord. Let the council remain steadfast, and, becoming better and purer, be the sole hope, the sole strength of the people." It was on the same day and at this very moment that Savonarola proposed the law for the abolition of Parliaments to which we have already alluded, and pronounced his famous diatribe against all who still favoured those gatherings, saying: "They refuse to understand that the council is the supreme power, and must command in all things." He found no threats nor punishments severe enough for those men, knowing that the Parliament was the means to which the Arrabbiati in general, and the Mediceans in particular, intended shortly to recur, in order to overthrow the present form of

government. Having thus impressed the people with the necessity of guarding against the coming danger, he offered a few other brief counsels and then hastened to conclude. He exhorted the Signory not to waste time continually on petty matters, as was too much the custom in Florence; but to limit their attention to affairs of importance and leave the rest to the minor authorities. He recommended them to encourage labour in all possible ways, "even should it be necessary to levy a tax on the guild of silk and wool." And finally he pronounced his farewell, saying: "My people, when I stand here, I am always strong; and if, when out of the pulpit, I could feel as when in it, I should always be well. But after descending these stairs I believe that my pains will return, and for this reason some time will pass before I see you again, for I must needs wait a little to recover. Then, if still living, I will again begin to preach. But probably a month may elapse, unless your prayers should recall me sooner. During this time Frà Domenico will preach in my stead; then will I return, if still alive. But the welfare of Florence will be cared for in any case. However much the wicked may labour at their work, this seed shall bear fruit, for it is God's will. I might this day tell ye who be the authors of your perils; but I would do harm to no man, and ye will know their names when they are brought to punishment. I must now conclude, for I have preached so often, and laboured so hard, as to have shortened my life by many years, and am fallen very weak. Well, brother, what reward wouldst thou have? I would have martyrdom; I am content to endure it; I pray for it each day, O Lord, for love of this city." [1]

After delivering this sermon, Savonarola immediately sent his reply to the Pope on the last day of July, and

[1] Predica of the 28th of July, "sopra i Salmi."

his letter is a remarkable combination of dignified humility and noble frankness. Acknowledging that a monk's first duty was certainly to yield obedience to his superiors, he said that it was likewise permissible to bring forward such reasonable excuses as might sometimes retard his obedience, and quoted, on this head, the words addressed by Pope Alexander III. to the Bishop of Ravenna. He then continued as follows : " Most Blessed Father ! My most ardent desire is to behold the shrine of the Apostles Peter and Paul in order to worship the relics of those great saints ; and still more willingly would I have gone thither now that the Holy Father deigneth to summon to him his humble servant. But I am barely issued from a very serious malady, the which hath forced me to suspend both preaching and study, and still threateneth my life.

" Furthermore, I am bound rather to obey the benign purpose of the command than the mere words in which it is framed. Now, inasmuch as the Lord, by my means, hath saved this city from much bloodshed, and subjected it to good and holy laws,[1] there be many adversaries, both within and without the city, who, having sought to enslave it, and having been confounded instead, now seek my blood, and have frequently attempted my life by steel and poison. Wherefore I could not depart without manifest risk, nor can I even walk through the city without an armed escort.[2] Also, this newly reformed government, that the Lord hath been pleased, by my means, to give to Florence, is not yet firmly rooted, and is visibly in danger without continued assistance; wherefore, in the

[1] " Quum Civitatem a non mediocri sanguinis effusione et a multis aliis noxiis, mea opera, Dominus liberaverit, et ad concordiam legesque sanctas revocaverit, infesti facti sunt mihi, tam in civitate quam extra, iniqui homines."

[2] Luca Landucci, " Diario," p. 106 : " And on the 24th of May, 1495, an attempt was made on Frà Girolamo's life in the street of the Cocomero, after he had been preaching."

judgment of all good and experienced citizens, my departure would be of great hurt to the city, while of scant profit to Rome.[1] I cannot suppose that my superior would desire the ruin of a whole city, and therefore trust that your Holiness will graciously accede to this delay, so that the reform begun by the Lord's will may be brought to perfection, since I am certain that it is for the good of the same that He hath now raised up these hindrances to my journey.[2]

"And should your Holiness desire greater certitude on the matters publicly foretold by me concerning the chastisement of Italy and the renovation of the Church, you will find them set forth in a book of mine that is now being made public.[3] I was anxious to have these predictions put in print, so that, should they be not fulfilled, the world may know me to be a false prophet. But there are other things of a more hidden nature that must still remain veiled, and which I may not as yet reveal to any mortal.

"Accordingly I beseech your Holiness to graciously accept my very true and plain excuses, and to believe that it is my ardent desire to come to Rome; wherefore, as soon as possible, I shall spur myself to set forth."[4]

To this letter the Pope made no reply; but, perceiving that it would be useless to insist any farther at present, sent an express message to Savonarola[5] to state that he accepted his excuses. So the Friar, having retired to his convent,

[1] "Discessus meus maximæ iacturæ huic populo, et modicæ isthie utilitatis foret."

[2] "Dum hoc coeptum perficiatur opus, cuius gratia haec impedimenta, ne proficiscar, nutu divino accidisse, equidem certus sum."

[3] He here alludes to the "Compendium Revelationum."

[4] *Vide* Appendix to the Italian edition, doc. xxiv.

[5] In his sermon on the 18th of February, 1498, Savonarola related the history of all the briefs received from Rome. And in mentioning his reply he says: "He (*the Pope*) accepted my excuses very graciously." *Vide* sheet 20–22 of Venetian edition, 1540.

studied his health, and only addressed occasional, short discourses to the brotherhood. He was replaced in the Duomo by Frà Domenico of Pescia, who did his best to expound his master's doctrines and imitate his style and mode of delivery, although unable to approach him in originality, energy, or eloquence.[1] Nevertheless the people went very gladly to hear him, for all loved the straightforward sincerity of his character, and knew that he acted as Savonarola's mouthpiece.

But while everything was going on in this quiet and peaceful manner, suddenly, on the 8th of September, a new and unexpected brief arrived from Rome, addressed to the brethren of Santa Croce, the foes of St. Mark's, designating Savonarola as "*a certain Frà Girolamo*, a seeker after novelty, and disseminator of false doctrines."[2] "This man's wits have been so perturbed by the changes in Italian affairs," the brief continued, "that he seeketh to make the people believe that he hath a mission from God and holdeth discourse with God, although unable to prove this, either by miracles or the direct evidence of the Holy Scriptures, as the canonical law would prescribe. We have shown great patience towards him, in the hope that

[1] One of Frà Domenico's sermons is to be found at the end of Savonarola's "Prediche sopra i Salmi," and bears the date of the 29th of September.

[2] "And then, after some days had passed, *i.e.*, about the whole of one month and a half of another, the before-mentioned brief having been issued towards the end of July, there came another brief dated about the 8th of September, full of vituperations, and including no less than eighteen blunders. And the first of these was, that the brief was addressed to the Monastery of Sta. Croce, and therefore went to Sta. Croce, whereas it was intended for St. Mark's. And it was further said in that brief: *Quemdam Hieronymum Savonarolam*, *i.e.*, a certain Jeronimo Savonarola, even as though he (the Pope) knew nothing of me, and had not written to me so affectionately less than a month and a half before! Then there were many other trifling errors, which honour forbids me to mention here; but by the many blunders in his briefs after so short an interval thou mayest see that the Pope has been misled" (Sermon of the 18th of February, 1498).

he would repent and retrieve his transgressions by making submission to us and desisting from that scandalous severance from the Lombard Congregation, to which our consent was extorted by the specious devices of certain monks." The brief wound up by referring the whole affair to Frà Sebastiano de Madiis, Vicar-General of the Lombard Congregation, ordering Savonarola to recognize the latter's authority, to go without delay to any place to which he might be summoned, and meanwhile *to refrain from every description of preaching, whether public or private.* The Convent of St. Mark was declared to be joined to the Lombard Congregation, and Frà Domenico, Frà Silvestro, and Frà Tommaso Busini were instructed to repair to Bologna within nine days. All this under pain of excommunication, *latæ sententiæ.*[1]

Why should the Pope have been so suddenly stirred to hostility after accepting the Friar's excuses? Why should a brief, solely concerning Savonarola and his brethren, have been addressed to the friars of Sta. Croce, the foes of St. Mark's? Undoubtedly for the purpose of increasing its publicity, and preventing its concealment. But the cause of the Pope's sudden change was only understood later. The dangers predicted in Savonarola's last sermon in July all came to pass, and the wisdom of his invectives against tyrants and Parliaments was clearly justified by Piero de' Medici's attempt. This indeed took place shortly afterwards, although its connection with other events compelled us to relate it in the preceding chapter.

[1] Mons. Quétif, in publishing this brief, gave it the date of the 16th of October, 1497. We knew this to be wrong, and believed that it should be changed to the 8th of September, 1496. But since then, the fresh documents brought to light by Signor Gherardi have enabled us to ascertain the real date to be 8th of September, 1495, as given in Codex 2053 of the Riccardi Library, sheet cix. *Vide* Gherardi, "Nuovi Documenti," &c., p. 256 and fol.

Hence it was highly important to the Pope that Savonarola should be reduced to silence; but in order to prevent the discovery that his chief purpose was to aim a blow at the Republic, he gave the question the air of a dispute as to the junction or severance of certain convents, and left it to be decided by others. The Congregation of St. Mark's once dissolved, Savonarola's authority would be at an end, and should he leave Tuscany, in obedience to the commands of the Lombard Superior, he would speedily fall into Alexander's hands.[1]

Savonarola had understood all this from the first, and was deeply incensed by it; but his position was one of extreme difficulty. He was reluctant to complicate the matter by openly rebelling against the authority of the Pope, but was determined not to allow the Republic to be crushed without exciting the Florentines to resistance. He freely expressed these sentiments in a letter of the 15th of September of this year addressed to a brother of his Order in Rome, saying: "It is known to all the world that the charges made against me are false, and will bring great infamy on those prelates and the whole of Rome. I well know that my accusers have no just cause of attack, for verily they are stoning me for a good deed; but I dread them not, neither fear I their power, for the grace of God and a pure conscience suffice me. I know the root of all these plots, and know them to be the work of evil-minded citizens who would fain re-establish tyranny in Florence, and are agreed with certain Italian potentates. All these men seek my death; thus I can no longer go

[1] "It was the Pope's desire to re-unite the said Congregation of Tuscany with the old and general Congregation of Lombardy, in order to remove this Friar from the city of Florence, and annul the Congregation of his followers and adherents; and all this had been brought about by the adversaries of the present government, and more especially by those who hoped that the city would turn in favour of the Holy League and the Medici House" (Nardi, vol. i. p. 124).

abroad without a guard of armed men. Nevertheless, if there be no other way of saving my conscience, I am resolved to make submission, so as to avoid even a venial sin. For the present I suspend judgment and take no hasty decision, following in this the precepts of the Fathers." [1]

In pursuance of this intent he forwarded a detailed reply to the Pope on the 29th of September.[2] In this he lamented that his enemies should have succeeded in deceiving the Holy Father regarding events witnessed by the whole people. "As to my doctrines," he continued, "I have always been submissive to the Church; as regards prophecy, I have never absolutely declared myself a prophet, although this would be no heresy; but I have undoubtedly foretold various things, of which some have already been fulfilled, and others that will be verified at some future time. Moreover, it is known to all Italy that the chastisement hath already begun, and how solely by means of my words there hath been peace in Florence, the which failing all would have suffered greater woes." And hereupon he reminded the Pope that the brief ordaining the separation (of the convents) had not been extorted by a few friars, but at the request of all, and

[1] This letter was published by Mons. Perrens, to whom it had been given by Abate Bernardi, who had discovered it in a codex of the Marcian Library of Venice (class ix. 41), with the date 15th of September, 1496. But this date was changed by Mons. Perrens to that of 15th of September, 1495, and Gherardi has proved that he was right in so doing. It is true that in the old Codex 2053 of the Riccardi Library (sheet cxvi[t]) the letter is dated 1496; but there is an added note to the effect that the letter should be placed directly after the brief of the 8th of September, 1495, and that its original date of 1495 had been afterwards erroneously altered to 1496.

[2] "Responsio Fratris Hieronymi Savonarolæ ad Alexandrum Papam sextum." This was wrongly dated 29th of September, 1497, by Mons. Quétif. We judged it to be a blunder, and supposed that it should be changed to 29th of September, 1496. But Gherardi (in his beforementioned work) proved that the real date to be assigned to it was that of 29th of September, 1495, as given in an authentic copy of the brief itself. Other Codices bear different dates, but the real one is that now given.

that it was only granted after long debate. "Then, as to leaving our case to the decision of the Lombard Vicar, this implies making our adversary our judge, since the quarrels between the two congregations are publicly known. What can have given birth to all this, Most Blessed Father, save the false accusations and lying reports of the enemies of this Republic, the which I have delivered from many dangers and restored to true religion and freedom, by destroying factions, reforming manners, and establishing peace? And besides," concluded Savonarola, citing the authority of many Fathers of the Church, "it is lawful for all to pass from one rule to another that is stricter and more severe. Our reunion with the Lombard friars at this moment would only deepen the rancour already, unhappily, existing between the two congregations, and give rise to fresh dispute and fresh scandal. And finally, inasmuch as your Holiness declares that you desire this union so as to prevent others from lapsing into my errors, and inasmuch as it is now most plain that I have not lapsed into error, the cause being non-existent, neither should its effect remain. Having therefore proved the falsity of all the charges brought against me, I pray your Holiness to vouchsafe a reply to my defence, and to grant me absolution. I preach the doctrine of the Holy Fathers, have departed in nothing from their precepts, and am ready, if I should be in error, not only to correct myself, but to avow it publicly, and make amends before the whole people. And now again I repeat that which I have always said, *i.e.*, that I submit myself and all my writings to the correction of the Holy Roman Church." At the same time Savonarola addressed many other letters to friends of some influence in Rome, repeating the arguments he had adduced to the Pope in his own favour, and most earnestly recommending his cause to all.

With his usual acuteness and sagacity, Alexander VI. grasped the difficulty of the case, and hastened to proceed with an astuteness truly worthy of a whilom law student of Barcelona. Seeing that the Friar was resolved neither to dissolve his congregation nor depart from Florence; seeing that Piero de' Medici's preparations were going on, and that this was a most critical moment for the Republic, and considering that the sole object of any real importance to himself, at this juncture, was to exclude the Friar from the pulpit, he desisted from threats and recurred to flattery. Accordingly on the 16th of October another brief[1] was despatched, in which the Pope replied to Savonarola's letter as though rejoicing over the recovery of a strayed sheep. "In other letters," so he said, "we have manifested our grief to thee, regarding these disturbances in Florence, of which thy sermons have been the chief cause; forasmuch as instead of preaching against vice and in favour of union, thou dost predict the future, the which thing might give birth to discord even among a pacific people, much more therefore among the Florentines, in whom there be so many seeds of discontent and party spirit. These were the reasons for which we bade thee to our presence; but now that, by thy letters and the testimony of many cardinals, we find thee prepared to yield obedience to the Roman Church, we do greatly rejoice, feeling assured that thou hast erred rather from overmuch simplicity than from badness of heart. Wherefore we again reply to thy letters, and in virtue of thy vow of holy obedience command thee *to abstain from all sermons not only in public, but in private*, so that no man may say that after preaching in the pulpit thou hast been reduced to con-

[1] To this brief also Quétif has assigned the date of 16th of October 1497. We believed it to be wrong, and Signor Gherardi (p. 259) reproduces the original brief, discovered by himself, and dated 16th of October, 1495.

venticles. And thou wilt persevere in this course until such time as thou mayest be able to seek our presence with greater safety and with honour—when we will receive thee in a joyful and fatherly spirit—or until we shall have come to a riper decision as to the course to be prescribed for thee, and appointed a suitable person to settle these matters. And if, as we doubt not, thou wilt obey, we shall then revoke all our preceding briefs, so that thou mayest tranquilly attend to thy spiritual welfare." [1]

By good fortune this brief of the 16th of October was a long time on the way,[2] and thus Savonarola, while awaiting the reply to his letter, was enabled to occupy the pulpit during that month and deliver the three sermons to which we have referred, and which contributed so much towards the failure of the Medici expedition. But on receiving the ostensibly affectionate brief that wound up by condemning him to silence, his position became more difficult than before. He thoroughly comprehended that all this paternal suavity was a mere device to seal his lips at the moment when the Republic had most need of his words: it was a stroke of the Borgia's usual craft that was now understood by all. In fact the letters of the Florentine ambassador in Rome gave information that the Pope's anger was growing daily more violent, and that he was absolutely determined to seize the Friar's person. But, as we have seen, Piero de' Medici's expedition speedily failed, and there being no longer any pressing need for Savonarola to raise his voice in defence of the Republic, he held his peace so as to

[1] "Later came another brief, saying that I had propagated doctrines fitted to sow discord among the most pacific people, and many other false things, and he therefore suspended me from preaching" (Sermon of the 18th of February, 1498).

[2] This is proved by the letters of the Ferrarese ambassador in Florence (Cappelli, Frà Girolamo Savonarola, &c.). *Vide* Prof. Cosci's work in the "Archivio Storico Italiano," Series IV., vol. iv. p. 306.

give his foes no fresh pretext for attack. In fact, during Advent in 1495 he never once ascended the pulpit, and Frà Domenico continued to take his place in Sta. Maria del Fiore.

The mind of Savonarola must have been deeply agitated during those months of silence, and when still so enfeebled by disease. He saw that he was being forced into a struggle with Rome, to defend his doctrines against obviously calumnious accusations, and his life from the snares laid for him by party hatred. If he took thought for his own safety, he would have to neglect the political reforms already making such satisfactory progress, and the moral crusade that had already led to such happy results. This was precisely the end desired by his foes. As to the charges of being a heretic, a disseminator of scandal, a seducer of the people, and so on, they were not believed, even by those who brought them forward. The Pope, as we shall soon see even more plainly, had no fault to find with the Friar's teachings; but, together with the Arrabbiati and Duke Ludovico, attacked him on entirely personal and political grounds, in order to exterminate his party by his downfall. So long as the struggle wore its true aspect of a purely political conflict, Savonarola had always faced it with a bold front; but now the ground was being shifted, the political question cunningly veiled in the guise of a religious dispute, and he realized all the dangers and difficulties of his position. Had it been really a question of dogma, he would have submitted to the authority of the Church; but the Pope merely taxed him in general terms with the dissemination of false doctrines, and commanded him to hold his peace. Therefore he must either forsake the people, in order to obey commands, solely aimed at the destruction of Florentine liberty, or he must rebel against the papal authority, bring his own cause before the public, and thus

breed scandal and dissension in the Church. He was deeply saddened by this, but unhesitatingly accepted silence, in the hope that a fresh attempt would be made by well-disposed magistrates and cardinals to bring the Borgia to a milder frame of mind. Indeed, Savonarola's letters at this period prove that he was then most firmly resolved never to return to the pulpit without permission from Rome.[1] But, notwithstanding his silence, he had no doubts regarding the justice of his cause. He wished to avoid rousing scandal in the Church, but could not recognize the validity of orders sent for political ends and inspired by his enemies' calumnious reports. The increasing iniquities of the Pope and his children, who were openly accused of incestuous intrigues, and of murders by poison, struck terror into all, and stirred Savonarola to irrepressible indignation. Accordingly, it was at this time that his theories as to the best mode of checking the evils oppressing the Church first took a definite shape. Many good and experienced Catholics maintained the opinion that Alexander's election was null and void, having been obtained, as all knew, by simony, and that the only way to put an end to the numerous scandals of which he was the cause, would be to summon a council to depose him. The leader of this party was the pugnacious Cardinal of St. Piero in Vincoli, afterwards Pope Julius II.[2]

[1] *Vide* Savonarola's letter to Frà Antonio of Holland, to which we shall allude farther on. It is included in the Appendix to the Italian edition.

[2] Padre Marchese, "Storia di San Marco," p. 225 and fol.: "Julianus Robureus, Card. S. Petri ad Vincula, in Gallias aufugit, iram Alexandri veritus, cum celebrandum Concilium œcumenicum diceret, nimirum ad erigendam Ecclesiam a simoniacis conculcatam." Rainaldo *ad an.*, 1492. The said Cardinal, on being made Pope, issued a Bull (14th of January, 1505) in confirmation of the Lateran Council, declaring Alexander's election null, and incapable of convalidation, even by the subsequent homage of the Cardinals. *Vide* Padre Marchese, p. 226, note 1. The same writer remarks on this subject (p. 231), that since Alexander's election has had the continued approval of the Church, no Catholics can

He styled the Borgia an infidel and a heretic, and was constantly in waiting on King Charles, doing his utmost to induce him to assemble a council, and achieve the reform of the Church. Nor was the monarch opposed to the idea, for his ambassador, De Commines, frequently repeats : " A little more and this reform would have been carried out." [1] The first time the French passed through Rome, no less than eighteen cardinals joined Della Rovere in pressing the king to procure the desired reform. And on two occasions the French guns were pointed on Castle St. Angelo, for the purpose of seizing Alexander's person, and summoning the council by force ; [2] but then, Charles, being always most hesitating when on the brink of a resolve, ended by taking the advice of Brissonet, who had great influence over him, and had received much favour and many bribes from the Pope.

None could be more anxious than Savonarola to urge on the council and procure the desired reform; and although he had sometimes hesitated to push the matter, for fear of raising scandal in the Church whose unity was his most cherished aim, the fresh infamies perpetrated by the Pope now put an end to his hesitation. Knowing that he might count on the sure support of the Cardinal of San Piero in Vincoli,[3] so long as he abstained from treating the subject in the pulpit, he continued to write pressing letters to King Charles, beseeching him to carry out the promised reforms.

concur in the opinion of Julius II. But, he adds, although this opinion did not bar Cardinal della Rovere's path to the Papal Chair, it led the way to Savonarola's martyrdom.

[1] " Preschoit (Savonarola) que l'estat de l'Eglise seroit reformé à l'espée. Celo n'est pas encore advenu, mais en fut bien près, et encore le maintient " (Commines, " Mémoires," &c., bk. viii. chap. ii.).

[2] Marchese, p. 227 ; Guicciardini, " Storia d'Italia," bk. i. chap. iv. ; Rainaldo, *ad an.*, 1495, No. 1.

[3] We learn from the documents of Savonarola's trial that the Cardinal had occasionally sent him words of encouragement and incentive.

Three of the letters, in fact, which we find addressed to the king, *post amissionem regni neapolitani*,[1] were written this year, and lead us to suppose the existence of others. In these, as in the previously quoted missive of the 26th of May, Savonarola always speaks as a prophet of the Lord: "Remember," he says, "that I repeatedly announced your descent into Italy, when it was expected by none; I have predicted your success, predicted your perils. The Lord hath punished ye, because, deviating from His commands, ye have abandoned His work. And still heavier punishments await ye if ye return not to the right path. I tell ye, in the name of the Lord, that if your ways be not changed, if ye maintain not your sworn promises, if ye fail to perform that which hath been commanded ye through my lips, the Lord will revoke your election as the chosen minister of His will, and elect another in your stead." The death of the Dauphin,[2] a few months after this time, confirmed the bereaved monarch's faith in the truth of Savonarola's prophecies. But even this was not enough to put an end to the eternal hesitancy by which he seemed fated to disgust all the world.

Meanwhile Savonarola kept silence, devoted himself to study, and corresponded with his kinsmen who were then suffering from poverty and domestic trouble. These letters show that, like all men of true greatness, he was constant and unchanging in his family affections. He urged upon his brothers the necessity of aiding one another, since, for his part, having renounced the world, he could only help them by his words. Nevertheless

[1] These, hitherto unknown, letters to which we have before alluded, are undated. They were discovered by us in the above-mentioned Codex 2053 of the Riccardi Library, together with the letter dated 26th of May, 1495. *Vide* Appendix to the Italian edition, doc. xxv.

[2] Charles Orlande, who died in childhood, at the beginning of 1496.

he heartily shared in their joys and their sufferings.[1] On the death of his brother Borso he wrote a letter to his mother in which he pours out his tenderness for her who was the object of his dearest earthly love, and the confidant of his most secret thoughts.[2] This is a truly remarkable letter, not only on account of the delicate feelings expressed in it, but as a proof of the identity of this affectionate son with the impassioned preacher we have seen launching thunderbolts from the pulpit, in the presence of an excited throng. We find the same ideas, the same words; he is always mindful of his lofty prophetic mission; he addresses exhortations even to his mother on the godly life and the vanity of the flesh, and concludes by announcing the approach of his death. "I would that your faith were as that of the holy Jewish woman of the Old Testament, so that ye might be able, without shedding a tear, to see your children martyred before your eyes. Dearest mother, I say not this in order to comfort ye; but to prepare ye, lest I should have to die."

About this time his health began to mend, and his need of activity revived with increased strength. But what was he to do? He would not return to the pulpit without permission from Rome, and Frà Domenico's sermons, although directed by himself, could scarcely obtain the same great results as his own. Nevertheless Savonarola always found some way of doing good, and, when unable to achieve much, contented himself with little. The Carnival of 1496 was now at hand, and the

[1] *Vide* the letter to his brother Alberto, dated 28th of October, 1495, included in the correspondence edited by Padre Marchese.

[2] We discovered this letter in the Magliabechian Library, and communicated it to Padre Marchese, by whom it was published in the "Archivio Storico Italiano," Appendix viii., with the remark, that "even were all the writings of Frà Girolamo Savonarola perished or destroyed, this letter would be sufficient proof of the sincere and steadfast piety of his soul."

Friar being silenced, the Arrabbiati were preparing to celebrate it in the old Medicean style, in order to vent the unbridled passions and filthy lusts which, as they thought, had too long been repressed. And thereupon the Friar determined to thwart them even in this matter.

But it proved a harder task than might have been expected. The Florentines had always been much given to carnival festivities, and under the Medici had indulged in these pleasures to an unlimited and almost incredible extent. During this holiday period the whole city was a scene of wild revelry; drunkenness and debauchery prevailed, and public decorum was cast to the winds. Savonarola's sermons had undoubtedly wrought a great change; but certain carnival customs were so deeply rooted, that neither new doctrines, altered laws, nor the severe prohibitions of the magistrates, had availed to extirpate them. And, as was only natural, the boys of Florence took special delight in these revels. They were accustomed, during those days, to continually stop people in the streets by barring the road with long poles, and refusing to remove them until they had extorted enough money to pay for their mad feastings by night. After these carousals they made bonfires in the squares, round which they danced and sang, and finally pelted one another with stones in so brutal a fashion that no year passed without some of the combatants being left dead on the ground. This *mad and bestial game of stones*, as the chroniclers style it, was frequently forbidden and the players threatened with the severest penalties; but none of these measures had the slightest effect. All the leading citizens, the Eight, even the Signory itself, had exhausted their efforts in vain. By nightfall the boys were so excited with the revels of the day that no penalty availed to keep them in check. At last Savonarola undertook the task. After the brilliant results achieved

during the past years, in the reformation of politics and morals, and being prevented by the changed condition of affairs from continuing those important crusades, he planned a third and simpler reform, that he styled *the reform of the children.*

Foreseeing that it would be extremely difficult to entirely abolish the old customs, he decided to transform them by substituting religious for carnival gaieties. Accordingly, at the same street corners where the children formerly assembled to demand money for their banquets, he caused small altars to be erected, before which they were to take their stand and beg contributions, not, however, for purposes of self-indulgence, but for alms to the poor. Sing as much as ye will, he said to the boys, but sing hymns and sacred lauds instead of indecent songs. He wrote some hymns for them himself, thus returning to the poetical pursuits which he had so long forsaken; and commissioned the poet Girolamo Benivieni to compose other verses of the same sort. Then, that all might be conducted with due decorum, he charged Frà Domenico to collect all the children and choose some leaders from among them, and several of the latter waited on the Signory to explain the proposed reform. Having obtained the sanction of the government, the boys of Florence, exulting in their novel importance, eagerly undertook their appointed work. The city was by no means quiet even in this carnival, nor was it possible to walk the streets without molestation; but although the children were as importunate as of old, it was now for the charitable aim prescribed by Savonarola. And thus, in the year 1496, the game of stones was suppressed for the first time; there was no more gluttonous feasting, and three hundred ducats were collected for the poor. Then, on the last day of carnival, a grand procession was arranged, in which, attracted by the novelty of the thing,

the whole population took part. The children went through the city singing hymns and entering all the principal churches, after which they handed over the sums collected to the "good men of St. Martin," for distribution among the "modest poor" (*poveri vergognosi*).[1] Some objections were raised by those who always murmured against every good work that proceeded from Savonarola; but the greater part of the citizens, and all worthy men, declared that the Friar had again achieved a task in which every one else in Florence had failed.[2]

By this time the Ten of War, or, as they were now entitled, the Ten of Liberty and Peace, being still composed of Savonarola's adherents, had succeeded in obtaining

[1] This carnival procession, the first organized by Savonarola, is left unmentioned by the biographers; but Paolo Somenzi gives a minute description of it in one of his letters to the Duke of Milan, saying that the children were 10,000 in number! This letter is dated 16th of February, and we give it in the Appendix to the Italian edition, doc. xxvi. Landucci speaks of the procession at page 125 of his "Diario," saying that on the 16th of February it was calculated that there were more than six thousand children of from five or six to sixteen years of age. At page 128 he mentions another procession on the 27th of March (Palm Sunday), in which five thousand boys and a great number of girls took part.

[2] The biographers have much to say of these recreations and the reform of the children. Nardi tells us: "Among other things it seemed specially remarkable how at this time was ceased and willingly dropped that foolish and bestial game of stones which used to be carried on during carnival, and was so inveterate and ancient a custom, that even the severe and terrifying edicts of the magistrates had never been able to repress, much less root it out" ("Istorie di Firenze," vol. i. p. 96). Savonarola himself considered that he had achieved great results in that carnival: "Thou knowest how in past times, neither the power of the magistrates, nor prohibitions and penalties, ever succeeded in putting down the evil custom of throwing stones during carnival, and how every year some were killed by it; but now a poor Friar, by a few words and prayers, hath put an end to it. Secondly, thou knowest that many sins were committed in carnival, and now even children go to confession, and this carnival hath been like unto Lent, the which must surely be the work of heaven. Thirdly, these children used to go about begging in order to buy staves and burn brooms, and feast and drink; but now they have collected more money for the poor, than thou with all thy wisdom wouldst ever be able to obtain" (First Lenten Sermon, 1496).

from Rome his nomination as Lenten preacher.[1] They had repeatedly addressed the Pope on the subject, and solicited many of the cardinals, and particularly the Cardinal of Naples, to induce him to revoke, were it only by word of mouth (*vivæ vocis oraculo*), the decree for Savonarola's suspension. And they had also written to Niccolò Pandolfini, Bishop of Pistoia,[2] and to Messer Ricciardo Becchi, the Florentine ambassador, saying: "You could do nothing that would be more grateful and welcome to all your fellow-citizens, or better appreciated by the good sense of this whole population."[3] Indeed it was apparently owed to the efforts of the Cardinal of Naples and others that the Pope's mood was somewhat softened; since, although no fresh brief revoking the decree of suspension was issued, these intercessors obtained leave for Savonarola to preach, in the hope that he would now adopt a more temperate tone towards Rome.[4] And so great was the anxiety of the Florentines to welcome him back to the pulpit, that on the 11th of February, 1496, the Signory unanimously decreed that he was to preach during the ensuing Lent.[5]

That the Pope was bent at this moment on conciliating Savonarola is indubitably proved by the fact that, precisely in the month of January, 1496, the Dominican convent of Prato, having fallen into a shamefully corrupt state, was annexed to the Tuscan Congregation, under the Prior of St. Mark's, who sent some of his monks to accomplish

[1] Appendix to the Italian edition, doc. xxvii.

[2] These letters are comprised in Gherardi's "Nuovi Documenti," p. 63 and fol.

[3] Letter of the 26th of January, 1496, included in the "Documenti" published by Padre Marchese.

[4] This is mentioned by Burlamacchi, and in the "Vita Latina"; and additional proof of it is also to be found in one of Pandolfini's letters to the Ten (24th of March, 1496), published by Padre Marchese, "Documenti," p. 149.

[5] The debate is given in Gherardi's "Nuovi Documenti," p. 65.

its reform. The affair was directed and carried out by the general of the Dominicans, Gioacchino Turriano, who was aided, or rather spurred to the task by the Signory.[1] A new prior was chosen for the Prato convent in the person of Frà Antonio d'Olanda, who immediately besought Savonarola to send him a preacher, and received the reply: "If permission be granted me to preach, I will send ye Frà Domenico of Pescia. Wherefore offer up prayers, and I trust we shall succeed."[2] Another event deserving public mention seems to have occurred just at this time, although no exact date is given by the many historians who relate it. The Pope had handed Savonarola's sermons to a learned Dominican bishop, hoping that the latter might discover them to contain some matter deserving condemnation; but after careful perusal the prelate returned the volume with the words: "Most Holy Father, this Friar says nothing that is not wise and honest; he speaks against simony and against the corruption of the priesthood, which in truth is very great; he respects the dogmas and the authority of the Church: wherefore I would rather seek to make him my friend, even, were it needful, by offering him the cardinal's purple." Whether the Pope was now beginning to fear this Friar who was not to be silenced, and consequently desired to conciliate him, or whether he was trying to set some new snare for him, it is undoubted that, by means of a Dominican, expressly sent from Rome for the purpose, a cardinal's hat was offered to Savonarola on condition that he would henceforth change the tone of his sermons. His astonishment on receiving, just at this moment, so unexpected an offer, and the indignation it

[1] The whole story of this junction of the Prato convent with that of St. Mark is explained by Comm. Cesare Guasti in Gherardi's "Nuovi Documenti," pp. 29–61.

[2] *Vide* Appendix to the Italian edition, doc. xxviii.

aroused in him, are scarcely to be described. He now possessed evident proofs that Rome made a traffic of the holiest of things, and in the fulness of his wrath refused any reply at the time, merely saying to the bearer of the scandalous proposal: "Come to my next sermon, and you shall hear my reply to Rome."[1] Such were the auspices under which Savonarola began his Lenten course of 1496, the most daring that he had hitherto delivered. Accordingly a minute account will be given of them in the following chapter.

[1] This fact is not only corroborated by the testimony of the "Vita Latina," sheet 28ᵗ, and Burlamacchi, page 85, but is also narrated by Bzovio ("Annales," an. 1494), by Fontana and Souveges, and declared to be beyond doubt by Padre Marchese, Meier, Perrens, &c. Savonarola himself made several allusions to it in his sermons and writings. "I desire neither hats nor mitres, be they great or small; I desire nought save that which thou hast given to thy saints; it is death; a crimson hat, a hat of blood that I desire." *Vide* his "Prediche delle Feste," 1496, Predica xix. And in other sermons he frequently said: "Had I cared to accept dignities, thou knowest well that I should not now wear a ragged cloak;" and in his dialogue, "De veritate prophetica," chap. 5, he clearly confirms the fact that he had been frequently tempted not only by threats, but by numerous promises. The authenticity of the fact is therefore beyond dispute, nor is it contradicted by any of the biographers. There is merely some uncertainty as to the date. It seemed best to mention it at this point, because the Lenten discourses immediately following seem to us to contain the reply indirectly given to Rome; nor is it possible to assign any other date to the affair.

# CHAPTER III.

*SAVONAROLA RETURNS TO THE PULPIT AS LENTEN PREACHER IN 1496.*

THE 17th of February, 1496, was a memorable day in Savonarola's life. He reappeared in the pulpit overflowing with grief and indignation. After having battled through an increasingly hard struggle with the Court of Rome, he was now granted, as it were, a covert permission to preach, and at the same time an endeavour had been made to seduce him by the offer of a cardinal's hat. He clearly saw that his contest with the Pope was daily becoming fiercer, and that the latter sought to have his blood. Doubtless, had he alone been concerned, he would have willingly given his life for the peace of the Church; but, in destroying him, it was also intended to destroy the Republic, of which he was the universally recognized and principal support. Consequently he must defend himself in order to defend the religion and freedom of an entire people, who by his means had expelled their oppressors and restored Christian faith and morality. Certainly, none could doubt the truth of his religious doctrines; neither the Pope who dangled the cardinal's crimson before his eyes, nor the Arrabbiati who hated him as an uncompromising reformer of morals, and could not brook the excessive rigour of his

piety. Nevertheless they had joined, as we have seen, in veiling the political question under the guise of a religious dispute, in the hope of thus being able to vanquish him with greater facility. They were determined to silence at all costs the voice that had dared, in the midst of corrupt and Pagan Italy, in face of a Pope whose crimes and lusts inspired terror in all, to uphold political freedom and Christian virtue. And now, strong in his own good conscience, Savonarola came prepared to make a daring defence, and to champion his cause before the whole world.

The crowd flocked with redoubled eagerness to hear again the voice that the thunderbolts of Rome had for long months kept silent. As the floor of the Duomo was insufficient for the multitude, a lofty amphitheatre with seventeen rows of seats was erected against the wall of the nave. It rose to a level of the lower windows, and was occupied by the children of Florence, now prominent members of Savonarola's congregation, and to whom his words were frequently addressed. The Signory had been obliged to adopt many precautions to prevent the disturbances planned by the Friar's opponents. His life, in fact, was perpetually in danger, for the Arrabbiati were evidently determined to kill him the first time they could take him by surprise in the streets. It was also known that Duke Ludovico had sent hired assassins to attack him; accordingly the guards of the Eight and some of the Gonfaloniers of the Guilds patrolled the city to maintain order.

No sooner had the Friar issued from his convent than the shouts and joyful cries of the expectant people rose to the sky, and he was immediately surrounded by a large body of well-armed friends to protect him from insult on his way to the Duomo. On that day all men's passions were strung to a high pitch. It was the most

solemn moment of Savonarola's life; he had never seen an audience so thirsting for his words; he was about to touch on a most serious theme, and knew that his sermon would be instantly reported to the Pontiff, to whose tempting baits he had this day promised a reply. On appearing in the pulpit, he stood erect and cast a firm glance round the church, while his eyes flashed like burning coals. The crowd was packed so closely that no man could stir, the silence so great that one could almost hear the preacher's hurried breathing as he laboured to control his agitation. Presently, calming himself with an effort, he quietly began his discourse in the shape of a dialogue.

"How is it, O Friar, that thou hast tarried so long in idleness, without coming to the camp to thy soldiers' aid? —My children, I have not been in idleness; on the contrary, I come from the camp, and have been defending a stronghold, the which, had it been captured, you also might have been destroyed; but now, by God's grace and through your prayers, we have saved it. . . . Come, brother, didst thou perhaps fear to be killed?—No, my children, certainly not; for had I been afeared, I should not have come here, where I am now in greater peril than before.—Then, dost thou not scruple to preach?—Not I. —But why not? We hear that an excommunication hath been sent, and that thou hast been forbidden to preach.—Hast thou read this excommunication? Who hath sent it? But even if it were so, rememberest thou not how I told thee that even if it came, it would be useless and of no avail to these wicked men full of deceit? . . . What then hath happened? Friar, thou keepest us overmuch in suspense. Now I will tell ye all, if ye will hearken with patience.

"I have said and bethought me: before proceeding *custodiam vias meas;* that is, I will look to my ways, if they

be pure of all contamination. Beholding so much opposition from so many parts against a poor man who is not worth three farthings, I have said in my heart: peradventure thou hast not looked well to thy ways, and therefore thy tongue hath betrayed thee; and I have looked to my ways one by one. I have chiefly examined them as to faith, for with grammar and logic have I no more concern: and certes, as regards faith my ways are wholly pure; for I have ever believed and do believe all that is believed by the Holy Roman Church, and have ever submitted and do submit myself to Her.[1] . . . I have written to Rome, that if peradventure I may have preached or written any heretical thing, . . . I am willing to amend me and to retract my words here in public. I am ever prepared to yield obedience to the Roman Church, and declare that whosoever obeyeth her shall not be damned. . . . I declare and confess that the Catholic Church will surely endure to the day of judgment; . . . and inasmuch as there be divers opinions as to the real definition of this Catholic Church, I rely only on Christ and on the decision of the Church of Rome."[2]

After this explicit declaration, by which the orthodoxy of his belief is placed beyond doubt, he touched on the more daring part of his doctrines. He then said that

[1] Sermon of the 17th of February. *Vide* "Prediche di Frate Hieronymo de Ferrara. Impresso nella Ciptà di Firenze ad instantia di Ser Lorenzo Vivuoli l'anno MCCCCLXXXXVI (1497) a di octo di Febbraio." Other editions were published in Venice in 1514, 1519, 1539, and 1543, but contain many mutilations, as, for example, that of 1514.

[2] The two latter passages, *i.e.*, that beginning with the words, "*I have written*," and the other with "*I declare and confess*," occur in the last of these Lenten sermons, delivered in Easter week (*ottava di Pasqua*). We give them at this point, in pursuance of our usual method of arranging as much as possible in their proper categories the ideas scattered through the sermons, to prevent over-frequent recurrence to the same topics. In the first and last of these sermons on Amos and Zechariah, Savonarola repeated several times his submission to Rome, always referring to the subject in almost identical words.

although the Church be infallible as to points of dogma, that by no means implies that we are bound to obey every command of our superiors or even of the Pope himself. "The superior may not give me any command contrary to the rules of my order; the Pope may not give me any command opposed to charity, or contrary to the Gospel. I do not believe that the Pope would ever seek to do so; but were he so to do, I should say to him, Now thou art no pastor, thou art not the Church of Rome, thou art in error.[1] For I would even say, Whenever it be clearly seen that the commands of superiors are contrary to God's commandments, and especially when contrary to the precept of charity, no one is in such case bound to obedience, for it is written, *Oportet obedire magis Deo quam hominibus*. . . . But if the case were not clear, or there were the slightest doubt, then we must always obey." These premises established, he proceeds to touch on his own case, saying that he cannot hold himself bound to obey any one who would remove him from Florence, inasmuch as all the inhabitants, even the women, know that his removal is desired solely from motives of political hatred, and that it would bring injury, not only to liberty, but to religion. "Were I to clearly see that my departure from a city would be the spiritual and temporal ruin of the people, I would obey no living man that commanded me to depart, . . . forasmuch as in obeying him I should disobey the commands of the Lord; and likewise because I should presume that my superior had no intention to do evil, but had been misled by false reports. O thou that writeth so many lies to Rome, what wilt thou write now? I know well what thou wilt write.—What, O Friar?—

[1] These ideas are not only expressed in the sermon of the 17th of February and that given in Easter Week, but throughout all the Lenten series, of which, indeed, they are, as it were, the basis and foundation.

Thou wilt write that I have said that one need not obey the Pope, and that I will not obey him. I say not so: write that which I have said, and thou shalt see that it wilt not be suited to thy purpose." [1] In fact, the doctrine expounded by Savonarola was entirely Catholic, and differing in no respect from that laid down by St. Thomas Aquinas and many doctors and fathers of the Church; nevertheless it was of a kind that, by a few verbal alterations, might easily be made to appear heretical; and this was precisely what his enemies attempted.

Resuming the thread of his discourse, he proceeded to say that, having examined his ways and found them to be clean, since his doctrine had always been in conformity with the Church; and although convinced that the briefs sent from Rome were invalid, inasmuch as they were solely inspired by lying reports, and opposed to the law of charity, he had nevertheless resolved to be prudent, and had therefore held his tongue so far, and had intended to remain silent. "But, when I perceived that many of the righteous were growing lukewarm, the wicked gaining strength, and the work of the Lord being overthrown, I boldly decided to return to the pulpit. First of all, however, I sought the Lord, saying: I was rejoicing in my peace and tranquillity, and Thou drew me forth, by showing me Thy light; and thereupon I became even as the moth that, tempted by the light, doth burn its wings. O Lord, my wings of contemplation are consumed; I have embarked on a stormy flood, assailed on all sides by contrary winds. I would fain reach the port, yet can find no track; would fain repose, yet find no resting-place; would fain remain still and silent, but may not, for the word of God is as a fire in my heart, and unless I give it vent, will consume the marrow of my bones. Come,

[1] Sermon i., "sopra Amos e Zaccaria."

O Lord, since Thou wouldst have me steer through these deep waters, let Thy will be done."

Savonarola ended his sermon by first addressing a few words to the young, whom he believed to be nearly all good, and then to the old, in whom he had much less confidence. "In ye, O young men, is my hope and the hope of the Lord. The city of Florence will be well governed by ye, because ye have not the evil tendencies of your fathers, who know not how to free themselves from tyrannical rule, nor understand the greatness of this gift of liberty that the Lord hath bestowed on the people.

"But as for ye, old men, ye pass your days in evil speaking at clubs and in workshops, and in your letters ye send forth many lies from Florence. Wherefore many say that I have thrown Italy into disorder; and this hath been charged against me in writing, even in official documents. Oh, ye fools! *Quis vos fascinavit non obedire veritati?* Where are my hosts and my treasure with which to disturb Italy? Not by me is Italy disturbed, but I foretell that she will be disturbed.

"I foretell that the scourge will be hastened by your sins. Thou unbelieving one, a mighty war will strip thee of thy pomp and thy pride. A mighty pestilence shall make ye cast aside your vanities, O women; as for thee, thou murmuring populace, thy tongue shall be stilled by a great famine. Citizens! unless ye live in the fear of God, and love of free government, the Lord shall bring sorrow on ye, and only fulfil to your children His promises of happiness to Florence." [1]

Thus finished the sermon in which Savonarola had given an epitome of all that he wished to express throughout Lent. His doctrines are daring, his charges

[1] Sermon i., "sopra Amos e Zaccaria."

against Rome are audacious, the words in which he describes the coming scourge are words of fire; but he says nothing that can be accused of heresy. We ought rather to admire the prudence with which he always refrained in the pulpit from any mention of Borgia's simoniacal election, or of the hope of a council, and avoided all open allusion to the offers received from the Pope, to which he only indirectly replied. The magnanimity of his nature forbade his taking advantage of a fact, that, however useful to himself, would have spread scandal in the Church. During the whole of Lent we find Savonarola constantly worthy of himself; essentially catholic, but at the same time with an amount of moral courage and independence such as few have possessed either before or after his time, fearing nothing in the world, allowing nought to check his progress. He is the sole defender of the people's freedom, of the freedom of his own reason and his own conscience; nevertheless he holds his standard aloft in the pulpit, and firmly confronts all the princes of Italy and the ill-advised thunders of Rome. Neither does he fear the poison and steel of the Arrabbiati, who are threatening his life on all sides—in the highways, in Church, and even in the pulpit.

During the whole of Lent he was unceasing in his terrible denunciations against the vices of Rome, and the false, hypocritical religion of the day. The second Sunday he delivered a sermon on this subject that has become famous, less for its audacity, which was not unusual, than because it was one of those interdicted by the Roman Court.[1] He began by giving a strange interpretation of the following text: "Audite verbum hoc, vaccæ pingues, quæ estis in Monte Samariæ." "Well, then: who be

[1] This sermon was excised from nearly every copy of these Lenten discourses, but it is to be found in one or two copies in the Magliabechian Library, and in one belonging to the Convent of St. Mark.

those which say that I should preach the Holy Scripture? . . . I preach nothing else. If thou knewest what is the Holy Scripture thou wouldst not speak thus. Rather thou shouldst have said: preach Tullius or Virgil, and then I should not have tested thee: but the Holy Scripture will test thee at all points. Well! I will preach the Scripture, I will obey thee. Tell me, how wouldst thou interpret these words?—O vaccæ pingues. . . . For me these fat kine signify the harlots of Italy and Rome. . . . Are there none in Italy and Rome? One thousand, ten thousand, fourteen thousand are few for Rome; for there both men and women are made harlots." And pursuing this strain, he describes the vices of Rome in terms scarcely to be repeated at the present day. He then turns to the people, accusing them of a false and hypocritical religion, only taking satisfaction in material things. "Ye are corrupt in all things, in your speech and your silence, in that which ye do and that which ye leave undone, in your belief and your unbelief. Ye speak against prophecy; and behold there cometh one to tell ye a strange dream, and ye have faith in it. He telleth ye: fast on a certain Sunday, at a certain hour, and ye fast, and believe ye are saved. I tell ye that the Lord willeth not that ye fast on such a day or at such an hour, but willeth that ye avoid sin throughout all the days of your life. Instead, ye are good for one hour of the day, in order to be bad all your life. Observe the ways of these men during the last three days of Holy Week. See how they go about seeking indulgences and pardons! Come here, go there, kiss St. Peter, St. Paul, this Saint and that! Come, come, ring bells, dress altars, deck the churches, come all of ye, for three days before Easter, and then no more. God mocketh your doings, heedeth not your ceremonies, . . . for, Easter passed, ye will be worse than before. All is vanity, all hypocrisy in our

times; true religion is dead."[1] And elsewhere: "How is it that if I were to say: give me ten ducats to one in need, thou wouldst not give them, but if I tell thee: spend a hundred for a chapel here in St. Mark, wouldst thou do it? Yes! in order to have thy coat of arms placed there, for thine own glory, but not for the glory of God. . . . Look through all convent buildings, and thou wilt find them full of their founders' armorial bearings. I raise my head to look above a door, thinking to see a crucifix, and behold there is a shield; I raise my head again a little further on, and behold there is another shield—armorial bearings everywhere. I don a vestment, thinking that a crucifix is painted on it; but arms have been painted even there, the better to be seen by the people. These, then, are your idols, to which ye make sacrifice?"[2] Then, after describing and condemning the corruption of the times, and especially of the clergy, he always repeats his predictions of the coming chastisement of Rome and of Italy.

"Prepare thee, I say, for heavy shall be thy chastisement, O Rome! Thou shalt be girdled with steel, put to the sword, to fire and flames. . . . Wretched Italy! how I see thee struck down; wretched people! how I see ye all oppressed![3] . . . Italy, thou art stricken with a grave disease. . . . Thou, Rome, art stricken with a mortal malady, *usque ad mortem.* Thou hast lost thy health, and hast forsaken the Lord; thou art sick with sins and tribulations. . . . If thou wouldst be healed, forsake feasting; forsake thy pride, thy ambition, thy lusts, and thy greed: these be the food that have caused thy sickness, these that bring ye to death. . . . Italy laugheth at this, Italy maketh mock of it, refuseth medicine, sayeth that the

[1] Sermon of the second Sunday in Lent.
[2] Sermon of the Saturday following the second Sunday in Lent.
[3] Sermon of Easter Week.

physician raveth. . . . O ye unbelieving ones, since ye will neither hearken nor be converted, thus saith the Lord: Inasmuch as Italy is all full of sanguinary deeds, . . . full of iniquities, harlots, and miserable panders, I will overwhelm her with the scum of the earth; will abase her princes, and trample the pride of Rome. These invaders shall capture her sanctuaries, and defile her churches; and inasmuch as these have been made dens of vice, I will make them stables for horses and swine, the which will be less displeasing to God than seeing them made haunts of prostitutes. When trouble and tribulation draw nigh, men will have no peace; they will seek to be converted, without being able; they will be confused and bewildered. . . . Then, O Italy! trouble after trouble shall befall thee; troubles of war after famine, troubles of pestilence after war; trouble from this side and from that. There will be rumours upon rumours, now rumours of barbarians on this side; then rumours of barbarians on that. Rumours from the east, from the west; from all sides rumour after rumour. Then men will yearn for the visions of the prophets, and will have them not, for the Lord saith, 'Now do I prophesy in my turn.' Men will lean on astrology, and it will profit them nothing. The law of the priesthood shall perish, and priests be stripped of their rank; princes shall wear haircloth; the people be crushed by tribulation. All men will lose courage, and as they have judged, so shall themselves be judged." [1]

In another sermon we find the following description of the plague that was to come upon Italy: "Believe ye this Friar, that there will not be enough men left to bury the dead; nor means to dig enough graves. So many will lie dead in the houses, that men will go through the streets crying, 'Send forth your dead!' And the dead will be heaped in carts and on horses; they will be piled up and

[1] Sermon of the fourth Sunday in Lent.

burnt. Men will pass through the streets crying aloud, 'Are there any dead? Are there any dead?' Then some persons will come forth and say, 'Here is my son, here is my brother, here is my husband!' . . . Again will they go through the streets crying, 'Be there no more dead here?' And the people shall be so thinned that few shall remain."[1]

Savonarola continued throughout Lent to preach in this strain. He first described the sins of Rome and of Italy, then announced the scourge, and always ended by calling the people to repentance. "*Heu! Heu! fuge de terra Aquilonis.* Fly from the land of Aquilon (the north)—*i.e.*, from vice, and return to Christ. . . . Behold, the sky shall be darkened; behold, it will rain fire and flames, stones and rocks; it will be wild weather. . . . I have placed ye between four winds, saith the Lord—namely, between prelates, princes, priests, and bad citizens. Fly from their vices, gather ye together in charity. Fuge, O Sion, quæ habitas apud filiam Babilonis. . . . That is, fly from Rome, for Babylon signifies confusion, and Rome hath confused all the Scriptures, confused all vices together, confused everything. Fly, then, from Rome, and come to repentance."[2]

This continued description of the woes of Italy is, in truth, so graphic and vivid, that Savonarola seems almost transported into the future by his own fancy, and to see all these things with his own eyes. No less extraordinary is his persistency in announcing the approach of his own end, and in always reiterating: "Not yet hath the day come for ye to wreak your will on me, *sed adhuc modicum tempus vobiscum sum.*[3] . . . I have said unto the Lord:

[1] Sermon of the Tuesday after the third Sunday.

[2] Sermon of Wednesday after the fifth Sunday in Lent. In all these extracts we have faithfully given Savonarola's exact words, but have omitted some of his many repetitions and plainer grammatical blunders.

[3] *Vide* the sermons of the Wednesday after the third Sunday in Lent, of Easter Tuesday, and many others of the series.

I leave Thee to take thought of this deed; I am but as a tool in Thy hand. And He hath answered: Leave all to Me. It will be with them even as it was with the Jews, who thought to destroy Me by nailing Me on the cross, and instead did make My name known throughout the earth. Therefore," concluded Savonarola, "like unto a good captain, I will fight even unto the death." [1]

But although still in an attitude of resistance, although still refusing to bow to the Pope's will, the latter had succeeded in putting him on his defence. Up to this moment he had spent his life in directing and spurring the multitude, infusing into it his ideas and his will, and continually enlarging his field of action; but now, to the serious hurt of the people, his circle of activity was narrowed: he was obliged to think of defending his own doctrines and his own life. His enemies were multiplying on all sides, and had resolved that even if the Republic remained standing, its founder at least should perish; and they were already closing in round the poor Friar. He was defending himself against their attacks with increased energy; was proclaiming to Italy and the whole world that they were trying to destroy the Republic by his death, to overthrow the inviolable rights of the human reason and human conscience; but meanwhile he was gradually being forced to relinquish the reformation of morals and politics. His position was essentially changed, daily becoming more difficult, and encompassed by greater dangers.

Nevertheless he did not leave politics entirely aside this Lent, since an opportunity occurred of recurring to the subject for several days. The new hall of the Greater Council was just completed at this moment. Its construction had been entrusted, in the first days of the new

[1] Sermon of the Monday after the fourth Sunday in Lent.

Government, to the famous architect, Cronaca, but the work was very slackly carried on until Savonarola began to urge him to haste in his sermons. He then brought it on with so much speed that the people declared that angels must have had a hand in it. On the 25th of February, a new Signory was elected by a great meeting of the councillors.[1] Gladdened by this solemn event, Savonarola devoted two of his Lenten sermons to political topics.[2] He dwelt upon the mode of conducting elections, and sternly condemned the party spirit always influencing them in Florence. "There be many that go about the city scattering notices to the effect that this or that man should not be elected. I tell ye: Never obey the suggestions of those papers. If those whom ye would not have elected be bad, ye may openly proclaim it in council, now that there is no tyrant to oppress ye. Wherefore come forth, and say frankly, Such an one is not fit for this office. But if he be a good man, let him be chosen."[3] Elsewhere he says: "I am told there be some in the council who, when one is about to be balloted, say of him Let us give him the black or white bean, because he is of this or that party. *Et quad peius est*, I am told there be many that say, He is one of the Friar's men, let us give him the black beans.[4] What! have I taught you thus?

[1] Rinuccini states, in his "Ricordi Storici," p. clix., that 1,723 members were present, although many failed to attend. But there must be some mistake here. Just before it (p. clvi.) he had stated that there were 3,200 citizens *eligible* to the council, of which number only one-third were elected for a term of six months at a time. It is true that many magistrates were admitted to the council in right of their office, and that a few young men were also admitted before attaining the age prescribed by law. But even including these, the number could not have amounted to 1,723.

[2] The 24th and 25th of February.

[3] Sermon of the 25th of February.

[4] In Florentine elections, as we have already explained, the black bean signified a favourable, the white an unfavourable vote; accordingly, to whiten a candidate (*partito*) signified to vote against and reject him; and even at the present day the same phrase is in general use.

I have no friend save Christ and the righteous. Act no more in this wise, for this is no purpose of mine, and ye would soon cause dissensions. Let electors give their beans to those they conscientiously hold to be good and sagacious men, as I have frequently told ye before."[1] And we would here remark that Savonarola, as he is seen in his sermons, his writings, and in the real history of events, is a very different man from the Savonarola depicted by many of his biographers, both ancient and modern. Where do we find the party spirit that, according to some, was the sole motor of his actions? Where the desire to exalt his own friends at others' expense? Where the narrowness, where the lack of magnanimity attributed to him? We find him, on the contrary, to be a man of lofty ideas, most noble principles, purely disinterested, and desirous of liberty and justice for all, even including those who were seeking his death.

On this important occasion, after having insisted at length on the necessity of conducting the elections without party spirit, he urged the citizens to be steadfast to their Greater Council, their new Government, and their liberty. And, in order to heighten the attachment of the people to the present state of things, he gave in either sermon a long description of tyrants, and the evils brought by them on cities subject to their yoke. "The term of tyrant," he said, "signifieth a man of the worst kind, who would grasp all for himself, give nothing to others, an enemy to God and to man. The tyrant is proud, lustful, and avaricious; and as these three vices contain the germs of all others, it follows that he hath the germ of every vice of which man is capable. Likewise all his senses are perverted: his eyes by looking on wantonness; his ears by hearing flattery of himself and censure of other men; his palate by the vice of gluttony, and so forth. He

[1] Sermon of the second Sunday in Lent.

corrupts magistrates, robs widows and orphans, oppresses the people, and favours those that incite him to defraud the Commune. He is devoured by suspicion, and has spies everywhere; he desires all to seem bashful in his presence, and be his slaves; hence, where there is a tyrant, no man may act or speak freely. In this wise the people become pusillanimous, all virtue is extinguished, all vice exalted. Behold, O Florence, thy fate, if thou wouldst have a tyrant. He is the cause of all the sins committed by the people; wherefore he will be called to render account of them to God, and will bear the penalty of his misdeeds. Thou, O citizen, that followeth the tyrant, thou art no less miserable than he. Thy tongue is enslaved when addressing him, thy eyes when regarding him, thy person is subject to him, thy goods at his disposal; thou art beaten with rods, and must yet give him thanks! Thou art debased in all ways. And such," he said in conclusion, "are the miseries of the tyrant and his followers, the which miseries weigh them down in this life, and bring them to eternal perdition in the next."[1] This description was repeated by the preacher in the minutest detail,[2] with a complete exposition of the life and passions of a tyrant and of his various acts of oppression. It was an appalling and terrible picture, not only painted in vivid colours, but often with truly artistic skill. And Savonarola persistently displayed it to the eyes of the people, and always concluded with these words: "Behold, O Florence, that which thou seekest." Nor was he speaking at random. On the 27th of April a plot was discovered, by which it had been designed to tamper with the votes and procure the election of the enemies of the Republic. Accordingly, three of the ringleaders were sentenced to

[1] Sermon of the 25th of February, 1496.

[2] He had already given an equally eloquent description of the same kind in his treatise "Sul Governo di Firenze."

perpetual imprisonment, and many citizens publicly reprimanded (*ammoniti*).[1]

During this Lent, Savonarola also addressed the children, a great number of whom occupied seats in the great amphitheatre raised in the Duomo. He exhorted them to charity and to diligence in study ; he was anxious that all should know at least the elements of grammar, and charged their parents to grudge neither expense nor labour to that effect. He also urged them to avoid assuming the ecclesiastical robe at too early an age, and gave them other good advice.[2] Then, Palm Sunday being at hand, he arranged a very edifying and solemn procession for the children. The election of the officials of the Monte di Pietà had just then taken place, and being an earnest promoter of that institution, Savonarola desired that its inauguration should be celebrated by the children.[3] Accordingly, early in the morning of Palm Sunday, a tabernacle was erected in church, decorated with a painting representing Jesus Christ riding into Jerusalem on an ass. Savonarola then preached a sermon full of wise counsel to the assembled children, ending

[1] Those sentenced to imprisonment in the *Stinche*, as leaders of the plot, were Filippo Corbizzi (the man who had called the meeting of theologians in the Palace for the purpose of accusing Savonarola), Giovanni Benizi, and Giovanni da Tignano. According to Rinuccini, page clx., the Signory, after hearing the verdict of the Colleges, of the Eight of Balia, and the Ten of Liberty, sentenced them to ten years' confinement and perpetual exclusion from all public offices. According to Landucci, however, page 130, the three ringleaders were condemned to confinement for life, and twenty-five others reprimanded (*ammoniti*).

[2] Sermons of Saturday following the first Sunday, and Monday after the third Sunday in Lent.

[3] "I hear that the officers of the Monte di Pietà have been elected : I should be well pleased that this undertaking should begin well. The children shall march in procession in honour of this, . . . and it shall be arranged at what point a collection of money should be made" (Sermon of the Wednesday before Palm Sunday). He repeated the announcement in other sermons during this week, and throughout Lent frequently spoke in favour of the Monte di Pietà.

with these words: "O Lord, from the mouths of these little ones shall thy true praises proceed. Philosophers praise thee according to the light of the world, these little ones according to the light of heaven; philosophers praise thee from self-love, and these from simplicity; philosophers praise thee with their lips, and these with their works." Then turning to the multitude, and raising the crucifix in his hand, he said: "Florence, behold! this is the lord of the universe, and would fain be thine Wilt thou have him for thy king?" Thereupon all assented in a loud voice, and many with tears, crying: "Long live Christ our King!"[1] Savonarola then left the pulpit amid the enthusiastic cries of the people and the murmurs of the Arrabbiati, who, although standing aloof at some distance, carefully kept him in view. In the afternoon the children, all in white robes with olive wreaths on their heads, and red crosses or palm branches in their hands, carried the tabernacle in procession through the town, and having visited all the churches, halted on the Piazza to sing a song composed by Girolamo Benivieni on the future felicity of Florence.[2] Then, having gleaned a good harvest of coin, they gave it to the Monte di Pietà. Thus the institution was brilliantly inaugurated by the urchins, who, under Savonarola's guidance, had forsaken carnival gaieties and devoted themselves to good works.[3]

But with the exception of the two sermons respectively given on the days of the opening of the Greater Council and of the Monte di Pietà, no political nor social

[1] *Vide* the Sermon given on Palm Sunday.

[2] "Viva ne nostri cor, viva, O Fiorenza." It is printed among Savonarola's poems in the Florence edition of 1847, pp. 17–20. It is also given, with a commentary, in the "Poesie" of G. Benivieni: Florence, 1500.

[3] Burlamacchi, p. 110 and fol.; "Vita Latina," &c. *Vide* the sermon given on the Wednesday before Palm Sunday, and on that Sunday itself. This event is also mentioned by the chroniclers, among others, by Landucci, at p. 128.

questions were treated in the rest of this Lenten series. Savonarola continued to preach in the same strain in which he had begun, and, on the eighth day after Easter, gave a last discourse, recapitulating and winding up all the subjects announced in the first of these Lenten sermons. In fact, these two sermons contain all the principal ideas that he purposed to expound at that time, and, on the last day of Lent, Savonarola again declared his entire submission to the authority of the Roman Church, saying that the Church would stand firm for ever, and that whoever should leave her fold would be eternally lost. He acknowledged the authority of the Pope in the words of the New Testament: "Thou art Peter, and on that rock will I build my church; and that which thou bindest on earth shall be bound in heaven." But after this he again repeated: "Nevertheless we are not compelled to obey all commands. When given in consequence of lying reports, they are invalid; when in evident contradiction with the law of charity laid down by the Gospel, it is our duty to resist them, even as St. Paul resisted St. Peter. We are bound to presume that no such commands will be imposed on us, but in case they were imposed, we must then reply to our superior, saying: Thou dost err, thou art not the Roman Church, thou art a man and a sinner." These were the identical words he had used in the first sermon. And in repeating them he now quoted many authorities in support of his ideas, and elucidated them by many examples. "If my superior command me to forsake poverty, I resist; if thy confessor give thee a command that is contrary to God's will, thou must resist and condemn him: for when the matter is quite plain, we should fear nothing, and persevere in the right path." But although justified by the verdict of the Fathers, these ideas were held to be very audacious, and in fact they were equivalent to a war cry. Even Savonarola

might have hesitated to proclaim them from the pulpit, had he not been convinced that Pope Alexander's election was null, and had not cherished a strong hope that a council would soon be called to remedy the woes of the Church, and put an end to the abominable scandals, infamies, and crimes by which she had so long been profaned.

Then, as to the individual case of his dispute with Rome, he again said on that day: "Do not all know that the brief was sent to favour those enemies of the Republic and myself who spread lies and calumnies concerning me? Do not all know that my departure hence would not only place my life in the utmost jeopardy, but also be very injurious to this people and the cause of freedom? For would not good morals be cast aside, and religion overthrown? This and none other is our enemies' desire. Thus I can only suppose that the Pontiff hath been deceived by my detractors' lying reports; and therefore I prefer to obey that which I hold to be his real intent: I cannot suppose that he seeketh the ruin of an entire people." And he again repeated the prophecy of his own doom: "What will be the end of the war thou art carrying on? If thou wouldst know the general result, I tell thee it will end in victory; but if thou wouldst know what will be its result as regards myself in particular, I tell thee it will end in death and being cut to pieces. Rest assured, however, that all this will serve to spread abroad this doctrine, the which proceedeth not from me, but from God. I am but a tool in His hands; wherefore I am resolved to fight to the death." He then related how, on the preceding night, he had beheld a vision in which he seemed to see a crucifix arise betwixt Rome and Jerusalem. From this poured a river of blood, in which unbelievers appeared very eager to plunge, while Christians entered it almost reluctantly. Then darkness covered the earth, and there

was a rain of fire and lightning accompanied by a terrible uproar. Hereupon the orator made this vision the text for another of the eloquent and vivid descriptions of the scourges of Italy, in which these Lenten discourses abound, and thus brought the series to an end.[1]

Many pages of these sermons afford excellent proofs that, under different circumstances and with a different course of study, Savonarola would have been the greatest of Italian orators. His impetuous utterances burn with a fire of new and genuine eloquence. His language is thoroughly original, for even in the very manner in which his ideas are conceived he has a special style of his own; his forcible imagery seizes the fancy, and almost takes it by storm. And if we remember his singular vigour of gesture and accent, we shall be able to understand the enormous enthusiasm he aroused in the people of Florence. In fact, the impression produced by him this Lent far exceeded that of the preceding years. The fame of these sermons on Amos and Zechariah was noised throughout Italy, and even beyond the Alps. On the one hand the enthusiasm of his followers was increasing to fanaticism, while on the other the hate of his adversaries was nearing its climax. The potentates of Italy raised cries of protest; the Pope was burning with fury, and it seemed as though the Vatican itself were shaken by the thunders of the Friar's eloquence. His courage in daring to assert the irresistible might of charity, of liberty, of justice, of faith, and of reason, and still more to cry it aloud in defiance of the threats of a Pope stained with infamy and bloodshed, was truly unprecedented, and, by awakening an echo wherever the sentiment of goodness still survived, threw men's minds in a turmoil. But of the different passions raging on all sides we must speak in the following chapter.

[1] Last sermon of the Lenten course on Amos and Zechariah.

# CHAPTER IV.

*VARIOUS WRITINGS CONCERNING THE WORKS OF SAVONAROLA. LETTERS ADDRESSED TO HIM BY DIFFERENT POTENTATES, AND HIS REPLIES. THE FLORENTINE AMBASSADOR'S INTERVIEW WITH THE POPE. SAVONAROLA RETURNS TO THE PULPIT AND PREACHES ON FESTIVAL DAYS ON TEXTS FROM RUTH AND MICAH.*

(1496.)

FOR the due comprehension of the effect of Savonarola's sermons it would be necessary to read the letters written in Florence at that period.[1] The Florentines seem to have been positively unable to think of anything excepting the Friar, and equally unable to confine themselves to truth. Some write that he (the Friar) scoffs at the bull of excommunication that has just arrived;[2] that he speaks of the Pope as worse than a Turk; the princes of Italy as worse than heretics: others assert that he intends to reveal from the pulpit all the crimes of his persecutors, and that he is about to prophesy still more marvellous things. Some

[1] Many of these letters are in the Manuscript Miscellanies of the National Library of Florence. See, among others, Class xxxvii. Cod. 288.

[2] "I can tell thee that Frà Girolamo says many bold things. Among the rest, he has received a decree of excommunication, yet makes a mock of it, as thou knowest he has often done." "Lettera di Roberto Giugni a Lorenzo Strozzi alle Selve," 18th of March, 1495 (Florentine style). See the above-mentioned "Miscellanea," at sheet 108.

say that he has become the tyrant of Florence; others, on the contrary, that he will soon reduce the enemies of the Republic to sad straits, even if he does not destroy them altogether in some miraculous way. And thus with the exaggerations of hatred and deceit on the one hand, and of admiration and fanaticism on the other, men's minds became more and more disturbed, and they had continual fresh food for their passions.

At the same time the press was deluged by such a swarm of strange pamphlets as to threaten the land with a new and fantastic literature. And here, too, while some of these publications exalted the Friar's name to the skies, others found no words, accusations, nor insults strong enough to assail him. Although, as regards literary merit, these compositions are almost unworthy of notice, they so vividly pourtray the circumstances and men of the time, that it is necessary to devote a few words to them. One of the most noted of these pamphlets, entitled the "Oraculum de novo sæculo," [1] by Giovanni Nesi, a somewhat celebrated disciple of Marsilio Ficino, was full of Neo-Platonic ideas. The mere title of the work proved the author to be a follower of Savonarola. It contained an account of a remarkable vision he had beheld, in which, finding himself transported to the other world, he carries on a long conversation with the shades of Eneas and Plato, and describes the latter as the precursor of Christianity. He then meets the celebrated Pico della Mirandola, who, guiding him through the heavenly spheres, shows him how Savonarola's doctrines are verified therein. During this celestial excursion Pico extols the Friar's

[1] This pamphlet was dedicated to Pico della Mirandola the younger. It was written in September, 1496, and published *ex archetypo Ser Laurentius de Morgianis anno salutis*, 1497. One copy of it is in the National Library of Florence. Nesi was the author of several sermons, tractates, and devotional essays.

intellect, character, and heart, and concludes by saying: *Sed quid plura? Christi est in omnibus æmulator egregius.*

A preacher in the church of Santi Spirito now assailed the new doctrine, daily hurling insults at Savonarola and challenging him to the ordeal by fire.[1] Savonarola despised the man and paid no attention to his attacks; but Messer Filippo Cioni, a Florentine notary, replied to him with an "Epistle," and Maestro Paolo da Fucecchio published a pamphlet in defence of the Prior of St. Mark's.[2] Another adversary, in order to inflict a deeper wound on Savonarola, feigned to be one of his supporters, and published a letter repeating in the form of doubts all the usual accusations, namely: of disseminating scandal in the Church, disobeying Rome, assuming to be a prophet, and so on.[3] Domenico Benivieni, brother to the poet of the same name, and author of a great number of religious compositions, immediately wrote an "Epistle" unmasking the coarse hypocrisy of this anonymous assailant, and afterwards produced numerous dialogues and tractates in defence of his master's doctrines and prophe-

[1] This was Frà Leonardo, an Augustine monk. "Here is what the preacher of Santo Spirito told us yesterday morning: that we were deceived in Frà Girolamo; and that if he would enter the fire for one quarter of an hour, he himself would undertake to stay in it for two. And he likewise exhorted all present that they should pray and beseech God, that in case anything said by the above Frà Girolamo be true, the Lord send a judgment on him (Frà Leonardo), and strike him dead." Another of Giugni's letters, dated 12th of March, 1495 (Florentine style). See the before-quoted "Miscellanea," sheet 109.

[2] This pamphlet was reprinted by Quétif in his "Aggiunte" to the "Life of Savonarola." It contains all the accusations made by the hostile preacher, the replies of Maestro Paolo da Fucecchio, and has Cioni's "Epistola" as a preface. There is nothing in it of any importance, excepting the curious point that Maestro Paolo, relying on the Council of Constance, maintains that the authority of councils is superior to that of the Popes. But he does not pause to discuss the subject.

[3] "Epistola responsiva a Frate Hieronimo da Ferrara dell' ordine dei frati predicatori da l'amico suo." It was printed in the fifteenth century, but without any date. There is a copy of it in the National Library of Florence.

cies.[1] He gave in these a complete history of the Friar's career as a preacher; described the state of corruption and unbelief, from which the Florentines had been rescued by means of the new doctrine; showed that the truth of this doctrine was proved by the righteousness of all its followers and by its perfect accordance with the precepts of Scripture; and, enumerating the Friar's numerous predictions, wound up by noting those which were already fulfilled or in course of fulfilment.

During the heat of this discussion a certain Frà Angelo, an anchorite, began to send forth from his hermitage in Vallombrosa a series of printed epistles to the different Italian States. In one addressed "Ai Signori e popolo di Firenze," he repeatedly confirmed the promises Savonarola had made, and claiming to have been specially in-

[1] "Tractato in defensione et probatione della doctrina e prophetie predicate da Frà Girolamo." Florence, May 28, 1496. This tractate is in fifteen chapters; it contains a full account of Savonarola's preachings, and many of his visions and prophecies. "Dialogo di M. Domenico Benivieni, canonico di San Lorenzo, della verità della dottrina di Frà Hieronymo," undated. This dialogue enumerates many printed and manuscript pamphlets concerning the Friar and his works; among others one by Bartolommeo Scala: "Contro i vituperatori del nuovo governo (a Latin copy dated Florence, 11 *Kal. Octobris*, 1496, is in the National Library). A lengthy "Trattato, con lettere ai principi," by Frà Paolo Nolano; an "Epistola invettiva a proposito della lettera a Carlo VIII.," &c. Benivieni's reply to the feigned disciple is entitled, "Epistola di M. Domenico Benivieni a uno amico, responsiva a certe obiectioni et calumnie contro a Frate Hieronymo da Ferrara."

Benivieni also wrote a great number of other epistles, sermons, dialogues, and religious tracts, one of which deserves mention on the score of its singularity. The "Scala spirituale sopra il nome di Maria." The five letters forming the name are used as the initials of five mottoes, representing the five steps of this Stairway (*Scala*), of which the author speaks. Thus Benivieni wasted his time! Not to swell the list of these productions *ad infinitum*, we need only include one by Pico the younger: "Defensio Hiero: Savonarolæ adversus Samuelem Cassinensem," per Jo. Franc. Picum Mirandulanum, ad Hieron. Tornielum. Anno, 1615, in Metropoli quà Francia mixta Suevis. This pamphlet, which is not identical with the later Apologia by the same author, is in the Guicciardini Collection, together with an older and undated edition.

spired by the Holy Scripture, declared that he had discovered in the Apocalypse a prediction of the descent of Charles VIII. into Italy and of his expedition to the East to re-establish the Christian Empire; and stated that he had written to announce these coming events to the Churches of Asia and Africa. In another epistle, addressed "Al Senato e Doge di Venezia," he said that he disapproved of their policy and that of the League, since the latter in opposing Charles opposed the will of the Lord, who had appointed the monarch to this *new enterprise.*[1]

This anchorite, inditing from his hermitage calculations of the respective forces of Turkey and France, and discussing the probabilities and consequences of war in the East, was a truly singular phenomenon! All Florence was now absorbed in politics; every one full of designs for the future; men of all parties had now taken up the pen. In fact, political pamphlets were beginning to multiply faster than ever, for in this way the Arrabbiati vented their passions and their irrepressible hatred for Savonarola, whom they sought to injure by every possible means. The Eight daily discovered fresh plots against the Friar's life, and were frequently obliged to put some of the conspirators to the question; while more than once, it is said, the crime was so close on accomplishment that its would-be perpetrators had to be sentenced to death.[2] But even this failed to cow the Arrabbiati; on the contrary, their courage was unabated, and when foiled in their

[1] One of the letters addressed to the Signory of Florence was written in June, 1496; another in January, 1497, was in reply to some who had said, "Have we not enough of friars without also being tormented by anchorites?" The epistle to the "Senate and Doge of Venice" was also written in January, 1497. The greater part of the pamphlets mentioned in this chapter are contained in the National Library, and registered in the last catalogue of the fifteenth-century writers, drawn up by Morolini. Some are also included in the Guicciardini and Capponi collections in the same library.

[2] *Vide* Giugni's letter of the 18th of March, to which we have already referred.

murderous attempts they had recourse to the pen. This indeed was their only weapon, now that, in consequence of the briefs from Rome, the Friar had withdrawn to his cloister. Accordingly, numerous epistles in verse and prose, sonnets, songs, ballads, and compositions of all kinds, were employed to heap contumely on his head.

A certain Girolamo Muzi wrote a ballad beginning with these lines:

O popolo ingrato,
Tu ne vai preso alle grida,
E drieto a una guida
Piena d'ipocrisia.[1]

Not content with attacking Savonarola, these men also turned against the magistrates, and censured their conduct.

Che i ducati e i marroni,
Le some dei capponi,
Giovenchi, han si gran forza,
Che rompono ogni scorza
Ch' è innanzi alla giustizia.[2]

And he continued in so insolent a strain, that the Eight prohibited him from holding any office for five years, and fined him sixty gold florins.[3]

[1] O ungrateful people,
Thou art caught by a cry,
And follow a guide
All full of hypocrisy.

[2] For ducats or chestnuts, oxen or loads of capons, have strength to burst the rind of justice.

[3] This *indecent ballad* (*frottola inonesta*), as it was styled by the Eight, was never published; but the author gave several copies to a friend, charging him to send one to Savonarola, affix one on the door of the Duomo, another on the Palace of the Signoria, and others in various places. A copy of the ballad, together with the sentence of the Eight, dated 16th of January, 1496 (Florentine style), is in the Florence Archives. It has been published in the "Giornale storico degli Archivi Toscani," vol. ii. p. 81.

But the best idea of the scurrilities employed by the Arrabbiati is to be gained from the "Defensione contro all' Arca di Frà Girolamo" of Francesco Altoviti.[1] The author claims to have suffered exile and every kind of persecution from tyrants, to be specially devoted to liberty, and now moved to attack Savonarola in defence of its cause. "It would seem," writes Altoviti, "that this man is so blinded and inflamed by vice, so dominated by pride, that even as he has falsely asserted to have discoursed with the Almighty, so he believes that he is to have the power of a dictator over the State and its forces, in order to give laws to the city and even to the whole world, like unto Moses, and to compel the pontifical power to accept them by force of threats." He laments that the Friar should have abolished the festivities of St. John's Day, destroyed the carnival, and put an end to all gaiety in Florence; and then, being at a loss what to say next, adds, "He wishes to play the tyrant, and though he has sometimes spoken against tyranny, has now lowered his tone, because Piero has become his friend." "And now there is no doubt but where Frà Girolamo is, there too is Piero de' Medici, and those who desire Frà Girolamo desire Piero de' Medici likewise. Wherefore, in order to extinguish thoroughly the name of the tyrant, it is needful to extinguish the name of the Friar, for he is the father of the tyrant, and the officer of the tyrant," and so on. What greater absurdity could be imagined? Yet, this was the language daily used by the Arrabbiati.

It must be acknowledged that neither were the Frateschi uniformly pacific; they too, occasionally vented their bile, as may be seen by the following verses:

> Voi ridete, e con sonetti
> Dispregiate il divin verbo;
> Ma, spectate il duro nerbo
> Che le spalle vi rassetti.

[1] A fifteenth-century copy, undated, is in the National Library.

Su, mosconi, a scompigliare;
Scarafaggi, a vostra stalla;
Calabron che siete a galla,
Fate i vizii un po' svegliare
Ma sappiate che mai falla
La iustizia col supplicio.[1] . . .

These compositions were sometimes issued in the shape of pamphlets, sometimes as fly sheets, circulated among the people from hand to hand, or affixed to street corners. More often, however, they were in the form of verses which were sung about the city and shouted by the Piagnoni and Arrabbiati at one another whenever they met in the streets. But the political character of Savonarola's adherents is not to be learned from the writings in which they returned insult for insult. It will be best ascertained from the still greater number of compositions in prose and verse in praise of the name and grandeur of the Florentine nation, and in which new laws and reforms are proposed, and the nature of those already established is discussed.

Mention may here be made of a few short tracts addressed to Savonarola and his community by Frà Santi Rucellai. They are entitled "Sul Cambio," "Sul Monte Comune," and "Sul Monte delle Fanciulle,"[2] and, in treating of some of the chief institutions of the Florentine Republic, also afford much valuable information on the financial condition of the city at that time.[3] But the

[1] With laughter and verse ye mock at the divine word, but wait till the hard lash straightens your backs. Buzz then, ye bluebottle flies; crawl, ye blackbeetles; whirling hornets, use your venomous stings! But remember that justice and chastisement will never fail ye. . . . These verses are printed, and are in the National Library. See the fifteenth-century writers, "Custodia" G., No. 14.

[2] "On Exchange," "On the Communal Bank," "On the Maidens' Bank."

[3] These unpublished tracts are in the National Library, Cl. xxix., Cod. 207. That on Exchange is the least important; the second explains the institution of the Communal Bank, which, as all know, was a bank for the

writings of greatest value, as giving life-portraits of the Friar's adherents, were produced by men of the people,

voluntary or forced loans contracted by the Republic in case of war or other emergencies under promise of repayment. "Very soon, however," says Frà Santi Rucellai, "the government ceased to refund the capital, paying instead 5 per cent. interest. Then the interest was reduced to 3 per cent., and now this 3 per cent. is sometimes paid, sometimes not." Things went from bad to worse. At first a bank-bond (*luogo di Monte*) of 100 florins could be realized for 80, then for only 66 or 50; I have seen its value sink to 30, to 25, and to 20 florins, and now, since this last war, it is only worth 10 per cent. Incredible though it seems, this was the state of the Florentine Republic during the war, of which we shall have to speak in the ensuing chapter.

The third treatise is on the Maidens' Bank, a very ingenious institution of the Republic, and one that was highly valued by the Florentines. It was founded in the following manner. When the Republic found itself unable to redeem its debts to the citizens, it endeavoured to find a way of reconciling public with private interests, and accordingly founded this Monte delle Fanciulle. This was the point of view taken: If a bank-bond of 100 florins can only realize 16, evidently its holder's capital is only 16 and not 100 florins. Now, any person depositing one of these bonds in the Maidens' Bank, and leaving it there without interest for sixteen years, shall receive at the end of the sixteenth year the sum of 100 florins in full. Thus, by the deposit of ten bank-bonds, a dowry of 1,000 florins could be formed, and so on in proportion. In order to obtain a dowry of 100 florins at the end of twelve years it was necessary to deposit bonds to the effective amount of twenty-four instead of sixteen florins. The Commune appointed special officers to determine the market value of the bonds, for this underwent daily variations, and, on learning in how many years the dowry would be required, fixed the amount to be paid. This arrangement was advantageous to private individuals, and very profitable to the government, since, if the maiden for whom the dowry was constituted chanced to die, the bank retained the deposit, and, if the girl took the veil, the bank was only bound to pay the real value of the deposit.

The bonds issued by the Maidens' Bank were always held sacred, and were scrupulously redeemed by the Communal Bank. Nevertheless, in the course of the last war (1496) the finances of the Republic were in so exhausted a state, that when a dowry fell due, only one-fourth of the promised capital was paid in cash, and even from this the expenses of the contract were deducted; while the rest of the sum was retained at an interest of 7 per cent. By this measure even the bonds of the Maidens' Bank were reduced in value, and were then sold for the first time at 75 per cent. The continual variations in the value of the bonds of the Communal Bank gave rise to a speculative mania similar to modern speculations on the Stock Exchange, and its fatal consequences are frequently lamented by the historians.

who, regardless of grammar, only wrote from spontaneous impulse and for their own satisfaction. One of these works, which may serve to give us a notion of the rest, was entitled "Riforma santa et pretiosa ha fatta Domenico Cecchi, per chonservazione della città di Firenze." The author begins in this way: "By the great love I bear to this people, I have taken it into my head to write this work, and can do nothing else; for day and night I feel impelled to the task, and could tell of such miracles wrought on me by it, that I myself am amazed thereat." Cecchi is a true type of the fanaticism that Savonarola's sermons had roused in the people: politics and religion are strangely jumbled in his brain; he reasons as one constrained by a superior power to offer advice to the Republic, and is overflowing with enthusiasm, natural talent, and devotion to freedom. His pamphlet shows complete ignorance of the first rudiments of literary art, joined to remarkable political sagacity; his suggestions give evidence of rare common sense, and we might suppose them to be based on a consummate experience of public affairs. He proposes that the Greater Council should be relieved from the duty of attending to numerous minor details, inasmuch as these not only take time owed to things of greater moment, but serve to prevent many from attending the meetings.[1] He writes on the "Decima," and shows the enormous advantage of a single tax of this sort, severely condemns arbitrary imposts,[2] since, as he justly says, "our city is being

[1] This mode of burdening the council and the Signory with petty affairs was noted and censured by all the Florentine historians of the period. We find, for instance, that in the month of March, 1495, the Greater Council was twice summoned to vote a bill, in order that two citizens might be granted permission to change their abode from one quarter of the town to another. Florence Archives, "e Provvisioni," Register 187, sheets 10 and 11.

[2] As before noted, the "arbitrio," was levied, almost hap-hazard on the supposed profits of the different trades and professions, and, consequently, to the injury of all. The clergy were exempt from this tax.

crushed by them." He approves of the tax on church property,[1] and would like to see a limit imposed upon dowries, "since then no gentleman nor artizan would be prevented from marrying his daughter."[2] In this book we find the first suggestion of the citizen militia, afterwards founded by Machiavelli, and which so heroically aided in the defence of the Republic. Cecchi argues, in fact, that certain officers should be elected to give a military training to all able-bodied men within and without the walls. "For thus, besides the advantage of the pay-money circulating among the citizens, be assured that one thousand of our own men will do better work than three thousand foreigners. By these laws," he says in conclusion, "bad men will be made good, and all Florence dwell in happiness. Likewise, in a short space of time, these (citizen soldiers) will give reform, peace, and unity to all Italy, since all will come to learn here, this city being the centre and core of Italy."[3]

[1] With his usual regard for justice, Savonarola was in favour of the taxation of church property. The "Provvisione" of the 8th of December, 1495, entitled "Officialium Presbiterorum Ordinatio," imposed a minimum tax of 50,000 florins on all those exempted from ordinary burdens, that is to say, on the clergy. See also Landucci's "Diario," p. 119.

[2] The author fixes a maximum for marriage portions. "At the highest, no one should give a dowry of more than 500 broad florins; artizans, of 300; peasants, of 50; those exempt from taxation, of 100."

[3] The National Library has no copy of this very rare pamphlet, and we first heard of it from the learned Englishman, Mr. Seymour Kirkup, who had a valuable library of Italian books and manuscripts. It consists of twenty-eight sheets, and in the last of these is a note to the effect that the pamphlet was completed on the 24th of February, 1496 (Florentine style). It was "printed by Francesco di Dino, and most diligently corrected by Domenico, son of Ruberto, son of Ser Mainardo Cecchi." The title of the work is also noteworthy as bearing the true Piagnoni stamp: "Jesù, a holy and precious Reform proposed by Domenico, son of Ruberto, son of Ser Mainardo Cecchi, for the preservation of the city of Florence and the common weal: and this is the good and true light and treasure of every one and of the city, and will cause justice to be observed and virtuous government. And take good note of everything, for this is the true and right path, by which all may attain to great happiness, and afterwards in a brief space all Italy and the whole universe likewise,

We may conclude this review of popular literature by ranking with Cecchi's prose the verses of an author signing himself: *I, Giovanni, neither noble nor gentle, but a Tailor of Florence.*[1] He is as enthusiastic as Cecchi for the Republic, is inspired by the same patriotic zeal, and, although a man of small learning, writes less ungrammatically and with fewer orthographical blunders. In one of his sonnets he attacks those who, although always seeking office, refuse to serve their country in moments of danger, and extols others who have joined in the campaign against Pisa. In another sonnet his reproofs are directed against the Bigi, who hypocritically feign themselves Piagnoni; and he warns them that they will not succeed in their intent:

O prete, o frate, o secolare strano,
Sia chi vuol, che non terrà la bocca
Al popolo fiorentino alto e sovrano.
Che chi al popol vorrà porre il freno,
Cadere lo vedrò in un baleno.[2]

He wrote some octaves in praise of patriotism and obedience to the Greater Council, several *terzine* to the future glory of Florence, and others censuring the policy of Duke Ludovico, the Venetians and the rest of the League, and threatening the Pisans with speedy defeat:

Però bisogna che il Pisano cali
Co' ferri a' piedi giù nella sentina,
Po' ch'è stato cagion di tanti mali.
E la famosa patria fiorentina

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as they may learn from this book." The Kirkup Library was dispersed some years ago. Another copy of the Cecchi pamphlet is in the possession of Signor O. Tommasini of Rome, and is quoted by him in his "History of Machiavelli."

[1] "To. Giovanni non sere nè messere, ma sarto fiorentino." We discovered these verses in the National Library, and have published them in the Appendix to the Italian edition, doc. xxix.

[2] Neither priest, nor friar, nor stranger layman, be he who he will, shall curb the jaws of the high and sovereign people of Florence. For were one to try to bridle the people, he would surely be overthrown in a flash.

In alia stae come bel falcone,
E la Lega niente la domina ;

. . . . .

Però non creda nessun sottoposto
Uscire delle branche al gran lione.
E chi lo ingannerà, tornerà tosto,
A suo dispetto, sotto il suo artiglio,
Come Cristo superno ha ben disposto.[1]

On examination of these and many other writings which were then in general circulation we are instantly struck by the immense difference between Arrabbiati and Piagnoni. Whereas the Friar's adherents are entirely honest and sincere, his adversaries are full of exaggeration, calumny, and deceit, and have no belief in their own words. Also, if setting aside the writings of the Arrabbiati, we turn our attention to those of the Piagnoni, we shall find them to be divided into two distinct classes—the political and the religious. There is an immense distance between the one and the other, not only on account of difference of subject, but in their tone and manner of diction. Men of the people discuss politics, men of learning religion ; the former are quite unlettered ; the latter know Latin and Greek, Aristotelian and Platonic philosophy. Nevertheless, as regards intrinsic worth, the writings of the people are decidedly the best. In fact, all these different pamphlets were the outcome of either political or religious energy. Whereas the first flourished in Florence, like a tree grown

[1] Wherefore the Pisan must be loaded with chains and cast into the pit, since he has caused us such mighty ills. And the famous land of Florence shall soar on high like unto a beauteous falcon, and the League shall have no power over it. . . . Yet let no subject (land) think to escape from the lion's jaws. And he who would trick the lion will soon, despite his struggles, feel again the grip of his talons, even as Christ above hath wisely ordained. At the end of the *ottave* is written : *finis* the 18th day of July, 1496 ;" and at the end of the following *terzine :* "*finis* the 30th day of November, 1496." They treat of the war with Pisa the withdrawal of the Emperor, and so on.

in rich and congenial soil which quickly sends forth luxuriant shoots, the other, fostered by Savonarola with the greatest tenderness, resembled a plant set in barren ground, and only kept alive by unremitting care and attention.

The Florentines were an essentially political race, and, after the expulsion of the Medici, immediately resumed their old habits of thought; so that it now seemed as though the Republic had never ceased to exist. Accordingly, while we see that the popular writers, from a sense of incapacity or perhaps of reverence, always abstain from religious topics, we find them continually occupied in discussing and writing on politics. Their spelling and grammar may be feeble, but their very blunders assist the ingenuous manifestation of their individuality: they are always full of life and ardour, full of spontaneous originality. But if it be asked whether, in this reawakening of the old Florentine spirit, there were any learned men devoted to politics, and if so, what were the merits of their writings, we should have to reply that the genius of Machiavelli, Guicciardini, and Giannotti began to bud under this Republic, and flowered in the sun of its freedom: all three were the undoubted offspring of the revolution of 1494, the revolution initiated by the Friar. For during that period we find political life active and flourishing in all directions. New laws and reforms are discussed with marvellous skill, and carried out with the utmost prudence; a new generation, full of vigour, is springing up, and men of riper age show experience in the business of the State. Even military affairs were conducted with success. Piero Capponi, as the leading spirit of the war, increased his reputation in the Pisan campaign; and the name of the valiant Antonio Giacomini had already become famous. All undertakings, in fact, were con-

ducted in a way that would have done honour to the most warlike of republics, and was especially admirable in the case of Florence, which had barely shaken off the yoke of its sixty years' slavery. And although the chief merit of this energetic and zealous exercise of freedom is due to Savonarola, the founder of the new Republic, the germs which, fostered by his care, so soon flowered and bore good and lasting fruit, must have been already latent in the Florentine people. Their freedom, in fact, outlived the Friar's death: after being crushed by the blows of many enemies, it revived with increased glory: again assailed by powerful hosts, it was finally overthrown, but its fall was heroic, and its glory has lasted for ever.

But, on turning our glance to the religious life of this same people, things wear a very different aspect. We always find something forced and ephemeral in it, something that defies definition, but is patent to all acquainted with the chronicles of the time and the religious works of Savonarola's disciples. The latter, indeed, can only faintly reproduce their master's ideas, and give feeble echoes of his words. No original thought ever issues from their mind, no vigorous line from their pen.[1] In spite of its boasted new birth in religion, this people has left posterity no record of its faith. Savonarola's is the sole figure that is truly and supremely religious; he seems to be the only real human being in the midst of a dream-world, where all is changing and evanescent. It must not, however, be implied that there was no great religious reform, no universal moral improvement; but this multitude that spontaneously reconquered its freedom, could only be kept steadfast in its faith by the daily

[1] Frà Benedetto might be cited as an exception; but he is only original and eloquent in the narration of real events: when touching on religious questions he never rises above the level of commonplace.

stimulus of the Friar's sermons. His voice once hushed, vice and unbelief instantly reared their heads. All can see that if the Republic of the Florentines survived their leader, not so their religion.

Although Savonarola tried to hide it from himself he must have frequently foreseen this result. At these moments he hurled bitter reproofs on his much-beloved people, threatened them with the awful wrath of the Lord, and announced that their promised felicity would be replaced by terrible chastisements. But he had an intense need of trust and hope; the natural course of events was no longer to be checked, and it was fatally whirling him along. When he first spoke to them of religion and morals, the Florentines were roused to love of liberty; he had then favoured their desires by counselling and promoting the foundation of a new Republic, and immediately became the idol of the multitude. But he sought to make politics and free institutions serve the cause of religion, whereas the Florentines wished to subordinate religion to freedom. Whenever the Friar lost sight of politics, he could no longer command his hearers' attention. Hence he was obliged to proclaim Jesus Christ King of Florence; to represent himself as the mouthpiece of the Virgin, when he counselled from the pulpit the formation of the new government, and declared that the Almighty Himself had ordained the abolition of Parliaments. He was continually obliged to compare the new order of government with the hierarchy of the angels, and the successive days of the Florentine rebellion with the seven days of the Creation! In point of fact, even while Savonarola seemed omnipotent over the Florentines, their religious indifference proved an insuperable obstacle; it was the only result achieved by the Medici that he could never entirely destroy. The people leapt from doubt to fanaticism, and from fanaticism back

to doubt, and his best efforts notwithstanding he never succeeded in making them truly devout.

This is a very important fact, and one deserving of serious attention, since only by its aid can we comprehend the unexpected catastrophe of the strange drama of Savonarola's life. His aim was to be the regenerator of religion; but the Florentines adored him as the founder of the Republic. If they showed so much ardour in defending him against the Pope, it was because the latter sought to reinstate the Medici in Florence, and therefore they upheld their own freedom in defending the Friar. But if Alexander Borgia, whose interest in religion was of the slightest, had succeeded in separating the one cause from the other, Savonarola could have no longer counted on the same zeal; the ground would have yielded beneath his feet.

Meanwhile—to resume our interrupted narrative—in consequence of Savonarola's sermons on Amos and Zechariah, the fame of the new doctrine was noised throughout the world. It excited much attention even in the East, where the Sultan caused the sermons to be translated into Turkish for his own reading.[1] From France, Germany, and England Savonarola received letters from new followers whom these sermons had converted to his views.[2] And at the same time the Italian princes addressed him sometimes in terms of flattery and then of reproach, inasmuch as all these potentates, being more or less uneasy in their conscience, considered themselves personally touched by his invectives against tyranny and vice.

The Duke of Ferrara, however, who was his true

[1] Burlamacchi, p. 71.

[2] Savonarola often alluded to this in his sermons. "Even from Germany letters come to us from men having faith in these things." *Vide* "Prediche sopra l'Esodo," sheet 39. Florence, 1498.

friend, maintained a constant and affectionate correspondence with him, through his ambassador in Florence. Savonarola gave him good advice and sent him his works in return.[1] On the other hand, Paolo Somenzi, the Milanese envoy, who had always been a pertinacious opponent, was now using his best efforts to persuade Savonarola to second the designs of Duke Ludovico, also, as we are well aware, a declared enemy of the Friar.

On the 12th of April, 1496, this man, Somenzi, sent his master a letter from Savonarola, earnestly begging him to give it a gracious reply, because "this Friar is now master of the people, and has the power to make it submit to your Highness." Savonarola's letter has not been preserved, but we see by the reply that he must have expostulated with the Duke for giving ear to his detractors, and urged him to do penance for his sins. Ludovico's answer is so excessively gracious as to be almost ironical. He excuses himself on the score of having heard that the Friar spoke ill of him, and inculcated, from the pulpit, the duty of disobeying the Pope; nevertheless he promises to believe no more of these calumnies. As to his own sins, says the ingenuous Duke, he is not conscious of having committed any, having always led the life of a good Christian. Would Savonarola kindly inform him what penance he should perform!

By the Duke's order, Somenzi brought this letter to St. Mark's, repeated his visit on several occasions, and tried by soft words to induce Savonarola to make the Florentines join the League. He also promised that his master would gain him the favour of his brother, Cardinal Ascanio, who was very powerful in Rome, and hitherto one of the most zealous in spurring the Pope to excom-

[1] *Vide* Appendix to the Italian edition, doc. xxx., some of Savonarola's letters to the Duke of Ferrara. Others, including those of the Duke, are given in A. Cappelli's "Frà Girolamo Savonarola," &c.

municate him. But Savonarola was neither to be conquered by threats nor by blandishments, and on the 25th of April sent Ludovico a very dignified reply. "It is not true that I have ever absolutely asserted that the Pope should be disobeyed. This would be reprehensible, as being contrary to the precepts of our faith, from which I have never swerved and never intend to swerve. The same calumniators have told you that I speak ill of your Lordship, but I allude to no special person when urging repentance upon all. And if your Highness be in the spiritual mind you give me to understand, you have only to persevere in it, and can need no better judge than your own conscience." He also told the orator, Somenzi, that he was by no means hostile to the Duke, and was ready to do all he could for his welfare; but at the same time "was no fitting instrument for that which was now asked of him." And he added that "the Florentines refused to enter the League, for fear lest the Duke, together with the other powers, should aim at destroying the popular government, and playing the despot in Florence." [1]

In the same way, and for the same reasons, Savonarola was obliged to write to Galeotto Pico, prince of Mirandola, who was then oppressing his States with cruel tyranny, and therefore deemed that he too had been attacked in the preacher's sermons. The Friar again denied having made any personal attacks, repeated that his mission was only to announce the scourge, and urge all to repentance.[2] The prince, who was brother to the famous Giovanni Pico della Mirandola, and father of Giovanni Francesco Pico, the biographer of Savonarola, had a very different nature from that of his kinsmen. His life was a series of

[1] *Vide* Appendix to the Italian edition, doc. xxxi., the letters of Somenzi, Savonarola, and the Duke.

[2] This letter has no date. It was published by Padre Marchese in the "Archivio Storico Italiano," Letter iv.

atrocious acts of cruelty, and he had long kept his mother and another brother confined in a dungeon. Accordingly Savonarola now changed his tone, and on the 26th of March, 1496, sent him a very menacing letter: "I counsel you to return to God, to live after the manner of a good Christian, to repent the past, and recur to piety. Otherwise, I make known to you that severe chastisement awaits you, and that you shall be scourged in your substance, your flesh, and your kindred. Likewise I announce to you that your life is near its end; that if you obey not my words, you will go to hell, and this letter will be brought up against you before the judgment-seat of God, and leave you no way of escape." [1] And Gio. Francesco remarks on this head: "My father was then in the prime of health and strength, and seemed likely to have a long life; nevertheless he only survived two years after this truly prophetic letter, and from that moment our family history has been a long and sanguinary tragedy that still seems far from its end." [2] The unhappy youth certainly did not foresee that he was to be one of the saddest victims of the disasters Savonarola had foretold. On the night of the 5th of February, 1533, he was murdered by the hand of his own nephew!

But of all these enraged potentates the Pope was by far the most incensed, inasmuch as he had only given Savonarola a verbal permission to resume his sermons, and hoped that the Friar would lower his tone. The Signory, on the other hand, had expressly commanded him to re-enter the pulpit, and he had shown himself more violent and aggressive than ever. Alexander, therefore, continued to address threatening reproofs to the Florentine orator, Messer Riccardo Becchi, not only complaining of the Friar, but still more of the Signory for upholding him and

[1] This letter also was published by Padre Marchese, Letter v.
[2] To. Franc. Pici, "Vita Hier. Savonarolæ," chap. xxi.

basely truckling to his will by refusing to join the League. Consequently on the 10th of March, 1496, a Pratica was held to consult on what should be done, but no conclusion was reached. No one wished to desert the French alliance; all distrusted Ludovico and the Pope, and all considered that Savonarola's sermons were indispensably required. Nevertheless, dreading lest Borgia should proceed to violence, they made an effort to pacify him. Even Piero Capponi, although one of Savonarola's adherents, remarked, with soldierly good sense, that they must remember what great harm Papal edicts had often wrought on the city, "and especially on our merchants in divers parts of Christendom." [1] The Ten wrote repeatedly to the orator and the cardinals in Savonarola's defence; [2] but the Pope was only the more enraged, and curtly refused to grant any spiritual indulgences asked by the Florentines at that time. It was decided to try to soften his anger by sending him, as had been proposed at the Pratica, an ambassador-extraordinary in the person of Messer Niccolò Pandolfini, Archbishop of Pistoia. But directly the prelate entered the Pope's presence, the latter greeted him with harsh complaints against the Florentines for remaining faithful to France, refusing to join *the Holy League for the expulsion of the barbarians*, and thus by their obstinacy bringing Italy to ruin. He then spoke of the Friar, and though his words were few, they displayed the depth and virulence of his ill-repressed wrath and hatred. The Archbishop tried to exculpate the Republic in the best way he could. As regarded the French alliance, he alleged the binding nature of treaties, and the constant hatred shown to the Republic by the Venetians and the Duke. Then, as to the Friar, he reminded His Holiness how he had himself, through the

[1] Gherardi, "Nuovi Documenti," pp. 67–68.
[2] Ibid. pp. 63–74.

lips of a Cardinal, authorized him to resume his sermons; so that neither the Friar nor the Signory could believe themselves guilty of disobedience. But at this point he was roughly interrupted by the Pope, who said: "Well, well! we need not speak of Frà Girolamo just now; a time will perhaps come when we can speak of him to better purpose. As to the rest, you give me nothing but words, and are trying to keep your foot in both stirrups at once." [1] Thus the first interview was brought to an end.

Meanwhile the Pope summoned a consistory of fourteen Dominican theologians, charging them to hold an inquiry on Savonarola's conduct and doctrines, so as to discover some mode of condemning and inflicting severe punishment on his followers as well as on himself. But it was strange to see how the principal charge brought against Savonarola by this assembly of theologians was that of *having been the cause of all Piero de' Medici's misfortunes.*[2] What other proof can be needed that the whole question was one of political, not of religious strife? The Ambassador Becchi did not remain idle while this was going on; but profiting by the favour and assistance of certain of the Cardinals, went round to all the others, trying to win them over to the side of the Republic, and endeavouring to gain time, since nothing else could be done at the moment.[3]

Meanwhile Savonarola, his sermons being ended, had gone after Easter to Prato, where he had preached on the

[1] In a letter of the 24th of March, 1496, addressed to the Ten, Pandolfini gives a minute report of this dialogue. *Vide* the "Documenti" published by Padre Marchese in the "Archivio Storico Italiano," pp. 149–151.

[2] This at least is the only accusation mentioned by the Ambassador, Messer Riccardo Becchi, who gives a full account of this consistory in his letter of the 5th of April, 1496. "Documenti" published by Padre Marchese, Ibidem, p. 152.

[3] *Vide* the same "Documenti."

MARSILIO FICINO.

prophet Joel from the steps of the chapter house, and afterwards delivered, in the refectory, a sermon on faith before all the Professors of the Pisan University, which, by reason of the war, had been transferred to this town. His success was immense; great numbers of people had journeyed from Florence to hear him, and "all the land of Prato," says an old biographer, "seemed turned into a church."[1] Several learned doctors were converted on this occasion. A certain Messer Olivieri, a canon of the Duomo of Florence and a skilled Aristotelian, said to his pupils: "Let us cast away our books and follow this man, for we are scarcely worthy of him." Marsilio Ficino, then considered the first philosopher of his age, expressed himself almost ecstatically regarding the excellence of Savonarola's doctrines. It was then, too, that the famous Niccolò Schomberg was converted, who afterwards assumed the robe of St. Mark, became Archbishop of Capua, and finally a Cardinal.[2]

[1] "Biografia Latina," sheet 21[t], where there is also mention of some sermons given in Lucca.

[2] This journey is noticed in a letter of the Ten to Becchi. Padre Marchese records this letter in a note at page 172 of his "Documenti," but wrongly dates it 1498, instead of the 16th of April, 1496. It runs thus: "At this present we hear that he (Savonarola) has gone to Prato and Pistoia; and we cannot refrain from laughing at what you tell us people are there saying about the government of the city depending on him, for he has never meddled in it, nor has any of our citizens ever confided the least thing to him concerning it." And in another letter of the 30th of March, 1496, the Ten wrote: "We marvel that so many things should have been said there about the Friar, as you write to us; for they are all fables and fictions invented by some one that seeks to accuse him for some evil end." *Vide* "Archivio Fiorentino," cl. x. series I., file 96, sheet 192. This second letter is also included by Padre Marchese at page 105 of his "Documenti."

We cannot ascertain whether Savonarola went as far as Pistoia; but there is no doubt about his visit to Prato. Burlamacchi mentions it at page 75, and adds that he also went to Pisa. This, however, is a mistake, since, as was noted by Guasti at page 43 of Gherardi's "Nuovi Documenti," Pisa was then at war with Florence. The mistake arose in this way: Burlamacchi always faithfully followed the "Biografia Latina," and in this work, at sheet 21, mention is made of Savonarola's sermons to

After these new triumphs Savonarola returned at once to Florence. He there hastened to revise and publish his treatise "On the Simplicity of the Christian Life" (*Della semplicità della vita cristiana*), intended as a serious reply to the Court of Rome, and in which, by a complete exposition of the whole Catholic doctrine, the author refuted the charges of heresy and schism his enemies were trying to bring against him. The chief merit of this treatise consists in its giving an exact and easily-understood compendium of the leading dogmas of Catholicism. And although this only demanded clearness of form and style, none the less it does signal honour to Savonarola's intellect that he should have been the first to attempt to free theology from the burdensome scholastic intricacies with which—even to this day—many writers still keep it encumbered, and thus begun to make it intelligible to the people. Later, we shall have occasion to note the presence of the same qualities in another work of far greater extent and importance, of which the present treatise, being merely, as it were, a rough sketch, may be passed over with hasty mention.

The author brought it out in the original Latin, almost simultaneously with an Italian translation, by Girolamo Benivieni,[1] to which he had written a preface, again

the whole of the Pisan University (*studio*) "qui tunc ibi (*et Prato*) florebat pulcherimum," and Burlamacchi, forgetting that the Pisan University had, on account of the war, been transferred by the Florentines to Prato, makes Savonarola go to Pisa instead, and gives that city as the scene of the events which took place at Prato. Landucci speaks of these sermons at Prato, and says: "There were so many people from Florence and all the country round, that there was a perfect rain of them."

[1] This treatise must have been written in January, 1496, since on the 10th of that month Savonarola sent it, "still imperfect," to the Duke of Ferrara, begging him to keep it secret, because he wished to revise and correct it before giving it to the world. In fact, the letter sent to the Duke with the manuscript is dated 10th of January, 1496. When Count Carlo Capponi published it in his collection of "Alcune Lettere di Frà Girolamo Savonarola," &c., he considered the date to be given according

declaring his submission to the authority of the Roman Church, and explaining that he only wrote and preached in order "to combat the unbelief of these times, in which charity hath grown cold, and no gleam of good works is anywhere seen." The first book of this treatise is the only part of it devoted to the Catholic doctrines. He begins by insisting on the necessity of good works, then proceeds to describe the Christian life, and says that its root and foundation entirely consist in the grace of God. He defines grace, and concludes that every Christian should seek after it with his whole soul, inasmuch as without grace good works are of no avail. In the same book he discourses at length on the subject of the Divine ecstasy, that product of the Neo-Platonic beliefs to which Savonarola was so keenly sensitive. He concludes by saying that, although, in the state of ecstasy, good works are of little use, no Christian can ever attain to the vision of God, save after having long abounded in charity. He then treats of ceremonials and sacrifices, regarding which he merely repeats the doctrines of Aquinas. He pauses to note the difference between the sacrifices of the Mosaic and the Christian law, remarking that whereas the former only acted as means, and according to the disposition of him that offered them up, the latter infuse grace even by their own intrinsic value. This forms the conclusion of the first and principal part of the work. Its other books mainly consist of moral precepts; long dissertations on inward simplicity of heart; on external simplicity in conduct, dress, and all else; and they conclude by describ-

to the old Florentine style, and that it should therefore be changed, according to the new style, to 1497. But this is a mistake, for one edition of the "Trattato della semplicità della vita cristiana" was printed in September, 1496, and another in October, 1496. As we have already explained, Savonarola being a Ferrarese, seldom dated letters to be sent out of Tuscany, according to the Florentine style.

ing the supreme bliss of the true Christian life.[1] The work was most eagerly read, was frequently republished, and must have been of great service in refuting the accusations of heresy under which Pope Alexander tried to disguise his personal and political attacks.

In the course of the same year Savonarola brought out an exposition of the Psalm "Qui regis Israel," in which he besought the Lord to come to rescue the world from its present depth of degradation. "For now all religion is extinguished," he said, "and it is the general practice to be one day in the theatre, and the next in the episcopal chair; to be in the theatre to-day, and to-morrow a canon in the choir; to-day a soldier, and to-morrow a priest." Meeting with the word *aper* in the course of the Psalm, he dwells on the instincts of that animal, and finds vices corresponding to every one of them in the priesthood of the day. He then again addresses the Lord, exclaiming, "Show to us at last Thy face, Thy light, and Thy truth."[2]

[1] This was printed in Latin at Florence, *anno domini* 1496, *quinto kalendas septembris*, by Ser Piero Pacini. The same printer published an Italian translation of it *on the last day of October*, 1496. It was again reprinted during the fifteenth century, without any indication of time or place; and in the sixteenth century many fresh editions appeared in Florence, Venice, Paris, and Cologne, also one at Leyden in 1633, and another at Grenoble in 1677. Father Philippe Chant, of the Company of Jesus, translated it into French and published it in Paris in 1672. In exposition of almost the same theme, Savonarola afterwards produced two dialogues entitled, "Solatium itineris mei." He began the first in the shape of a discussion between Sense and Reason; but finding it was growing too long and full of quotations, he left it unfinished and rewrote it in a simpler form, better adapted for popular use. Soul and Intelligence are now the interlocutors; they speak of Jesus Christ and the future life, attack the errors of the Jews, and finally discourse of "the road to the heavenly land" that is indicated by the title. Both these little works appeared in Venice subsequently to the author's death —in Italian in 1535, and in Latin in 1536. As the chief object of all Savonarola's writings was the good of the people, he expounded the same ideas in many different shapes, the better to impress them on his readers' minds, and to diffuse them in all ranks of society.

[2] "Expositio Fratris Hieronymi Savonarolæ, psalmi lxxix., Qui regis Israel," &c. Florentiæ anno salutis. 1496, iv. Kalendas Maii. On the

This was truly characteristic of Savonarola! Submissive as to dogma, he was daring to the pitch of audacity as regarded points of discipline, and to the last hour of his life always remained the same.

In the month of May he returned to the pulpit to preach Sunday sermons on the Book of Ruth and on Micah. This time also his discourses were few and extremely long; frequently, after remaining silent two or three weeks, or even a month, he would preach in the Duomo for many hours at a stretch. He hoped by this course to avoid giving the Pope continual cause of complaint, and at the same time to keep alive the people's enthusiasm for his teachings and their own freedom. "We are still here," he told them, "instead of having fled, as some have declared. The first motive that urged us to come was the calumnies of these foes. We also discerned that for lack of dew from the pulpit, everything was becoming withered and our numbers diminished. I will even confess to ye that I cannot live without preaching; and, finally, I am here in obedience to Him that is the Prelate of prelates and the Pope of popes." Savonarola explained in these sermons how the Lord's spirit descended on the priesthood through the medium of the saints, and was then diffused among the whole people. "But now," he added, "the corruption of the clergy and the corruption of the Church prevent the spirit from being diffused among believers. Therefore we must needs beseech God to help us, and send down the scourge that, by correcting the Church, will re-open the way for an abundant diffusion of grace and of the spirit."

On the 23rd of May he invoked the descent of the

8th of June two new Italian editions of it appeared in Florence, a third at Modena in the same year, and another one (undated) in Florence. In 1509 it was again reprinted in Florence, at Lugano in 1540, at Tubingen in 1621, and also in other places.

Holy Spirit with such ardent and impassioned words, that his hearers were moved to torrents of tears. And the following day, in resuming the same subject, he said, "Even as the conjunction of the planets produces divers effects on the earth, so the prelates, who should be the planets of the Church, produce vices or virtues in the people, according as their qualities be evil or good. When they are corrupt, the whole Church and all Christianity are corrupt. Then the righteous are exposed to terrible warfare, inasmuch as they are bound to obedience, because all superior power emanates from God; but they are not bound to yield to commands opposed to the law of God. Wherefore there is great tribulation, great warfare when Christian princes are bad, and greater still when to the temporal power the spiritual also is united. Thereupon the anguish becomes unbearable; nevertheless we have to remain submissive, for *it is not the Lord's will that the keys be changed.* They (the wicked princes) have a double power, the spiritual and temporal conjoined, and use both in defence of evil. How, then, can we live the good life? All seem to have fear of goodness. It was far happier in the days of the apostles; for they at least were not bound to respect an authority with which they were at war. What, therefore, can be done at present? We must await the coming of the scourge." Then, addressing himself to the clergy, he said, "I am the gate, crieth the Lord to ye, and he that enters not by this gate is a thief. Thou, prelate, that buyest benefices, art a thief; thou, father, that buyest them for thy children, art a thief. Traffic not, I say, in spiritual things; ye have them *gratis*, therefore give them *gratis* to others. Who, then, will follow the Lord's summons? who will be clothed in simplicity and forsake all things for the Church? O prelates! O lords of Italy! come forward! Will ye take this woman? Behold, this is their reply: 'Cedo jura *propinquitatis*.' They

yield their rights, and will have none of them. Be ye therefore witnesses unto me, that I have called on them without cease for the last six years; or rather Christ hath called on them through me, yet they have refused to come and they renounce their rights. Wherefore strip their benefices from them, O Lord, and deprive them of all things. The sword, the sword, that is the sole remedy! I warn thee, O Italy! I warn thee, O Rome, that by Christ alone canst thou be saved! The time hath not yet come to send the Holy Spirit; but the time will come, and then, O Lord, Thou shalt be praised in all eternity." [1]

Thus this sermon ended, and nearly all the rest continued in the same strain to the 20th of August, 1496. On that day we find him preaching in the Hall of the Greater Council, by request of the Signory. Inspired by his surroundings, he now recurred to politics, and in rendering a general account of his past life, seized the opportunity to rebut the numerous charges which were being spread against him. "The clergy wrongfully complain of me. If I have attacked vice, I have attacked no individual in particular. But still greater wrong is done me by the citizens, who go about crying that I meddle in all the business of the State. I have never intervened in your affairs; both in public and in private I have said, and now repeat in this place, that such is not my office; and even did I seek to interfere in those things, no one ought to give ear to me. What if I have suggested good laws for the well-being of the people and its liberty? what if I have checked discord and pacified men's minds? All that hath been to the glory of God; and those men would stone me for a good work. They go about crying: The Friar would have money, the Friar hath secret intelligences, the

[1] "Prediche sopra Rut e Michea," delivered on the festivàl days of the year 1496, after the end of Lent: Florence, 1497; Venice, 1513; Sermon i.

Friar would play the tyrant, the Friar would have a Cardinal's hat. And I tell ye that had I desired such things, I should not be wearing a tattered robe at this hour. I would be glorified only in Thee, my God! Neither mitres nor Cardinals' hats would I have, but only the gift Thou hast conferred on Thy saints—death, a crimson hat, a hat reddened with blood; that is my desire. But I tell ye that unless ye provide against these murmurings, great hurt will befall your city." After this introductory, Savonarola proceeded to offer suggestions for the security of the new government. He advised that the council should be allowed full liberty of discussion and authorized to express its opinions, but that a law should be passed at the same time for the severe punishment of all persons spreading slander in the city. "When the citizens are gathered together, no man can speak to the purpose unless he may speak his whole mind. Therefore let all have faculty to say what they will. O Father, there be many in whom one can put no faith. Have no care for that. Let them speak, for by their deeds shall they be known. But see ye that heavy penalties be inflicted on such as go about speaking evil of that which hath been said in the council. If thou art ill content with that which thy neighbour saith, do not speak ill of him, but come forth and declare to him: I like not your reasons, and then give him better ones in return. But if ye be distrustful the one of the other, and do nought but slander one another, then shall ye reap nought save dissension and discord." [1]

The delivery of this sermon in the Hall of the Greater Council, in the presence of all the magistrates and leading

[1] Sermon of the 20th of August, "sopra Rut e Michea." This sermon is also mentioned by Marin Sanudo, who records in his "Diarii," vol. i. pp. 284–285 (Venice, 1879), that this sermon was given in the Hall of the Great Council for the purpose, as he says, of keeping the Florentines firm to their alliance with the French.

citizens of Florence, seems almost to carry us back a couple of years to the brilliant and successful days when the Friar was engaged on the foundation of the new Republic. How could the Florentines find courage for this open defiance of the Borgia's wrath, this disregard for his threats and his briefs? We are forced to conclude that some great change must have taken place in the position of the State. In fact the new events occurring in Italy had evoked so many new dangers on all sides, that men turned in their alarm to the Friar, who alone had been able to steer them safely through their worst difficulties. And although his former efforts had been so ungratefully repaid, he again devoted himself to the defence of the Republic, and met, as we shall presently see, with a still baser and more cruel reward.

# CHAPTER V.

*THE STRAITS OF THE REPUBLIC AND THE DISASTROUS COURSE OF THE PISAN WAR. THE DEATH OF PIERO CAPPONI. THE THREATS OF THE ALLIES, WHO SUMMON THE EMPEROR MAXIMILIAN TO ITALY. THE NEW BRIEF ISSUED BY THE POPE AGAINST SAVONAROLA, AND THE LATTER'S REPLY. THE REPUBLIC IS BESIEGED IN LEGHORN BY THE FORCES OF THE EMPEROR AND OF THE LEAGUE. SAVONAROLA RETURNS TO THE PULPIT, AND THE FLORENTINES ARE MIRACULOUSLY RESCUED FROM EVERY DANGER.*

(1496.)

THE turbulent vicissitudes of the past years had paralyzed the commerce and industry of Florence; the exorbitant sums paid to the French king and spent on the war had been a continual strain on its resources, and the public credit was lowered to such an extent that a bond of 100 florins on the Communal Bank was only worth ten florins in the market.[1] For the last two years the Signory had summoned a meeting of the council almost every month, to demand fresh supplies and impose fresh taxes;[2] but by this time both public and private funds were equally

[1] A *luogo* of the Communal Bank corresponded, as we have before explained, with what would now be called a share in the funds.

[2] Although by the law of 1495 the citizens were only bound to pay one-tenth (*Decima*) of their yearly income, the books of the Decrees (in the Florence Archives) are full of successive new tithes (*Decime*) levied by the Signory and the councils.

exhausted. To these troubles famine was added; for the rural districts were cruelly pinched by hunger, and the peasantry flocking to Florence in troops. According to the old law they would have been expelled as foreigners; but the new rule of charity accorded them a brotherly welcome. There was much discussion on the point, it is true, but the Friar's adherents carried the day, and gave shelter in their own houses to as many persons as possible.[1] Then, however, all poured into Florence, and misery increased. The sight of those haggard rustics augmented the general depression, and there were already a few cases of death from the plague.[2]

Nor did any better luck attend the campaign against Pisa, where the besieging forces were daily dwindling away from lack of provisions and money. On several occasions Florence had the pain of seeing some of her mercenary leaders desert to the enemy for higher pay; since the Pisans were always receiving fresh supplies now that Duke Ludovico and the Venetian Republic were trying to gain a foothold in that city. Thus, while the Florentines saw the enemies they faced daily growing in strength and numbers, other foes were attacking them in the rear. The peasants whose fields had been for two years ravaged by the war, were now suffering from famine, and, maddened by hunger, often broke out in revolt and attacked the camp in such great numbers and with so much fury that it was necessary to repulse them by force.[3]

[1] Nardi, vol. i. p. 104.

[2] Nardi, vol. i. p. 104 and fol. See, too, the "Biografia Latina" and Burlamacchi. In Landucci's "Diario," p. 127, we read: "Just at this time the plague assailed us worse;" and at pages 132 and 134, that the disease known under the name of French boils (*bolle franciose*) was spreading very rapidly that year. As we see by a debate of the 3rd of March, 1496, measures were already being taken to check the pestilence, and Savonarola wrote to his brother Alberto on the 24th of July, 1497 that "More people are dying of certain malignant fevers than of real plague."

[3] Nardi and Guicciardini.

Profiting by this state of things, the Pisans sallied forth under the command of Gian Paolo Manfroni, and gave battle to the whole of the besieging army. Both sides fought well; but the Florentines were compelled to abandon all their strongholds in the plain and withdraw to the hills.[1] Towards the middle of September they were again attacked, and forced to surrender their position on the hills, thus forfeiting all their previous advantages. Thereupon the enemy, pushing forward with increased daring, endeavoured to cut the communications between Leghorn and Florence.[2] Had the attempt succeeded, the Florentines would have been utterly ruined, as by no other road could necessary supplies of corn be obtained.

But of all their disasters, the greatest and most depressing to men's minds was the death of that brave and generous citizen, Piero Capponi, on the 25th of September, 1496. He was laying siege to the castle of Soiana, in the hope of recapturing it from the enemy, and, according to his usual habit of doing the work of a common soldier as well as of commander, was engaged in planting his guns against the walls, when a shot from the Pisans struck him down.[3] His biggest gun had burst on the previous day, and this had seemed to him so evil an omen, that he had predicted his own death, and written to his confessor, Frà Salvestro Maruffi, asking him to commend his soul to God.[4] The news of this event spread incredible terror both in the camp and the city. His soldiers fled in dismay from Soiana and refused to continue the siege.[5] In Florence the Government immediately decreed splendid obsequies to Capponi at the

[1] Soiana, Terriccinola, Cigoli, and others.

[2] Guicciardini, Nardi, Sismondi.

[3] See Acciaioli's "Vita del Capponi," published in the "Archivio Storico Italiano," vol. iv. part ii.

[4] Machiavelli, "Frammenti Storici: Opere" (Italy, 1813), vol. ii. p. 308.

[5] Acciaioli, "Vita di P. Capponi."

expense of the State, and no other citizen was ever so universally mourned. His corpse was conveyed up the Arno to Florence in a funeral barge, exhibited to the public in his house by the Trinità bridge, and then borne to Santo Spirito, followed by all the magistrates and a countless multitude of people. The Church was illumined by quantities of huge torches, and the walls were draped with four rows of banners, in which the arms of the magistrates alternated with those of the Capponi. Eulogistic speeches were pronounced over his bier, extolling the deeds and lamenting the loss of this valiant soldier and eminent citizen. His remains were then laid to rest in the tomb prepared by his grandfather Neri, for his illustrious great-grandfather Gino Capponi.[1]

But fate had fresh adversities in store for Florence. Taking advantage of the perils by which she was threatened, the allies pressed her from all sides, to induce her to break with France and join in the so-called Holy Alliance. Aware of the great detestation in which Piero de' Medici was held, they said no more about him, but promised to maintain the free government of Florence, and assist it to conquer Pisa, provided it would enter the League; otherwise they threatened instant war to the Republic. The Arrabbiati favoured the pretences of the allies, but the people unanimously opposed them, knowing well that these were merely intended to pave the way for a change of Government,[2] and also because no reliance could be felt in the promises of allies who were too ill-

[1] In the same Church of Santo Spirito. *Vide* Acciaioli's "Vita di Piero Capponi"; Giovanni Cambi, "Cronica" of the 25th of September, 1496.

[2] "The which caused much trouble and murmuring among the people, who were universally agreed not to break with his Majesty the King, especially because of their doubts that certain evil-disposed citizens were secretly plotting, by this means of the League, to alter the present government of the Republic" (Nardi, vol. i. p. 90). The same is to be inferred from the letters of the Italian ambassadors in Florence.

agreed among themselves to be able to achieve anything. On the other hand, King Charles was again talking of a second descent into Italy, and seemed to be already preparing for the enterprise, so it was accordingly decided to remain firm to the alliance with France.

But this rumoured return of the French filled the soul of Duke Ludovico with fresh alarms. He who boasted of being the umpire of Italy, and was the chief author of all her disturbances, now trembled at every change of the wind, in continual fear of losing the power he had usurped. We find him at once planning new treaties and alliances, summoning fresh strangers. For some time past he had been on good terms with the Emperor Maxmilian,[1] who had taken one of his nieces to wife, and granted him the investiture of the Milanese duchy as a fief of the Empire. He therefore conceived the idea of inviting Maximilian to come to Italy to possess himself of the iron crown, re-establish the diminished authority of the Empire, and act as arbiter in the many dissensions of the different States. The presence and authority of the Emperor would suffice, he thought, to prevent the coming of the French; and furthermore, Maximilian being entirely unprovided with men and money, would be necessarily dependent on those who could furnish him with both. And Ludovico manœuvred so dexterously that he was authorized to invite him in the name of the League and promise him 40,000 ducats monthly, for three months; of which sum 16,000 were to be supplied by the Venetians, as much by Ludovico himself, and 8,000 by the Pope, on condition, however, that the Emperor brought an army strong enough to achieve some effect.[2]

[1] At that time he was only King of the Romans, although called Emperor by the Italians.

[2] Sismondi, "Histoire des Républiques Italiennes," vol. vi. p. 460. In Guicciardini's "Storia d'Italia," vol. ii. p. 69, we find it stated that the Emperor was promised 60,000 ducats, and that Ludovico the Moor

But at this juncture it was learnt that King Charles had renounced all idea of returning to Italy. That monarch was once more expecting to become a father, and was too much absorbed by this joyful hope to think of other things. In fact a son was born to him in September; but it died the following month, leaving the king so overwhelmed by grief, that he took no measures to relieve the scanty remains of his army, left in the kingdom of Naples, who, without supplies, and hard pressed on all sides, were on the point of falling into the enemy's hands. The news of the Dauphin's death produced various effects in Italy. It was regarded in Florence as a fresh verification of Savonarola's prophecies. Then the intelligence that Charles had abandoned all thoughts of Italy slackened the eagerness of the allies for the Emperor's arrival, and made them almost retract their offers. But Ludovico, although now unsupported, firmly adhered to his purpose, and pressed him to come even more eagerly than before, in the hope that being now his sole ally, he would be able to lead him as he chose. While Maximilian was marching towards the frontier, the Pope was encouraged by the new aspect of affairs to put an end to delay and come to open war with the Florentines. His forces and those of the Sienese stationed at the bridge of Valiano attempted to invade the territory of the Republic. After repeated repulses, however, they were driven to flight and compelled to seek refuge at Montepulciano. But although the Florentines were victorious, this event had forced them to weaken the army before Pisa, while it was in the sad straits we have recently described, and at a moment when

undertook to give him 30,000 more. But so deep was the distrust of the Florentines for the League, that, as Nardi writes, "It was publicly stated that their (the Florentine) dominions had been amicably divided and apportioned among the said members of the League" ("Istorie," vol. i. p. 97).

the movements of Ludovico and the Emperor kept them in dread of fresh attacks from the north.[1]

The Emperor, in fact, had already crossed the Alps, but with so small a force, that, as if from a sense of shame, he avoided passing through Milan, where the Duke had made grand preparations to receive him. Taking the route by Genoa instead, he sailed from that city on the 8th of October, with six Venetian galleys and a few Genoese ships. Disembarking at Spezia, he marched inland to Pisa, with only 1,000 foot soldiers, who were soon joined by a second thousand, and five hundred horse. The Pisans gave him the heartiest welcome, lodged him sumptuously, and, rushing to the bridge over the Arno, cast into the river the statue of King Charles, and set up the Emperor's in its place. They were full of hope, well supplied with men and money, good leaders, and abundant provisions. Reinforcements, too, were pouring in from all sides, and now, as a piece of additional good luck, came this opportunity of gaining the prestige and power of the Empire in favour of their cause.[2]

With the Florentines, on the other hand, all things fared badly, fate and mankind being equally adverse, but nevertheless they faced their ill-fortune with admirable energy. Their courage never failed; they went on collecting men, money, and all obtainable provisions, and sent everything to the camp. They appealed to the patriotism of Florentine merchants settled in France for contributions in aid of their native land, urging them to hire soldiers, send corn, and do everything in their power as behoved good citizens. Nor did their efforts stop here; for on perceiving that at this moment Leghorn was the key of the Tuscan territories, and about to be attacked by the foe,

[1] Nardi, Guicciardini, Sismondi.

[2] Nardi, vol. i. p. 103 and fol.; Guicciardini, "Storia d'Italia," vol. ii. p. 81; Sismondi, vol. vi. p. 465.

they instantly furnished it with abundant supplies, and set to work so vigorously to strengthen its defences, that it seemed well-nigh incredible how in their straitened condition they could accomplish so much.[1] And, as we have already seen, the Signory's first thought was to secure Savonarola's help, and induce him to rouse the courage of the masses, who, disheartened by the many dangers and enemies arrayed against them, were apparently incapable of effort without the stimulus of his voice. Savonarola had promptly and readily undertaken the task of encouraging the more influential citizens. But he had not yet returned to the pulpit, foreseeing that if he began to preach, the Roman Court would instantly make him the object of fiercer and more threatening attacks, such as he felt reluctant to provoke.

For, of all the Republic's foes, Alexander was undoubtedly the most virulent. The Duke of Milan would have been satisfied for the present by seeing the Arrabbiati gain the upper hand in Florence. and the Venetians by acquiring some influence in Pisa ; but the Pope aimed at the total destruction of the Republic, and the temporary reinstatement of the Medici, to pave the way for his own sons. Unlike all the other allies, who were content to await the coming of the Emperor, he could not restrain his eagerness, and began to attack with his own troops. His ruling motive was hatred for Savonarola, whose return to the pulpit he greatly feared, knowing that the Florentines, if again guided by their Friar and cheered by his voice, would probably be capable of heroic resistance. And in that case all the hopes inspired by the Emperor's descent might speedily be crushed. He therefore began to weave fresh intrigues ; waiting, nevertheless, to see the issue of the war, for the Friar was not preaching at this moment, and the affairs of

[1] Nardi, Sismondi, and Guicciardini.

the Republic were rapidly going from bad to worse. The Imperial troops, increased to 4,000 strong by the Venetian and Milanese contingents, were already pushing on the siege of Leghorn. The Venetian fleet held the sea and blockaded the port, while a company of their soldiers was stationed at the Sacco bridge to cut the communications between Leghorn and the army encamped before Pisa. Nevertheless the Florentines provided for the emergency with a courage worthy of the old days of their Republic.

First of all they despatched Antonio Canigiani to restore discipline in the camp where there had been much disorder since Capponi's death, and he was also instructed to concentrate the army at Montopoli, in readiness to march on whatever point circumstances or the movements of the enemy might dictate. Bettino da Ricasoli, the governor of Leghorn, was noted for his energy and military talents, and now the Ten sent him a reinforcement of three hundred men, under the command of Count Cecco, who, profiting by a dark stormy night and heavy rain, contrived to slip through the enemies' lines and make his way into the city. Thus strengthened, the garrison made several brilliant sallies, in which the Imperialists were defeated. Also, even in the midst of their adversities, it was a great advantage to the Florentines that the Emperor should not only be so incapable of directing the war, but likewise be hampered rather than helped by the Venetians and the Duke. For these latter, while quite willing to oppress Florence, had no desire to create another power in Italy; therefore they first urged the Emperor forward, and then pulled him back: thus allowing him to harass the enemy, but never to satisfy his ambition of marking his arrival by some notable feat of arms. Besides, Venice and Milan were already at odds, neither wishing the other to occupy Leghorn when the war should be ended.

For these reasons the Florentines had been so far enabled not only to hold their own against numerous and more powerful opponents, but to gain an occasional advantage over them. Their resistance, however, could not be much longer maintained, since famine was beginning to accomplish what the attacks of their enemies had failed to effect. And now their last hope was destroyed by the news that all the efforts of the Florentine merchants in France to come to their aid had entirely failed. These merchants had engaged the Count of Albigeon and his troops, had purchased many vessels and loaded them with wheat at their own expense, but, at the last moment, the Count had refused to fight in Italy, and the ships being caught in a tremendous gale on first leaving port, some of them had returned to Marseilles, and others had put out to sea in different directions, in the hope of making larger profits. Besides, even had they sighted Leghorn, how were they to enter the harbour when it was so strictly blockaded by the Venetians? [1]

Accordingly the general misery in Florence had increased to a pitch that is hardly to be described in words. Dread of the future was depicted on all countenances, while the faces of the poor were haggard with famine. The hospitals were all full. Peasants often sank down exhausted by the roadside, and perished for lack of food. The plague was making daily progress.[2] Yet, to such an

[1] Sismondi, vol. vi. p. 467; Nardi, vol. i. p. 105; Guicciardini, "Storia d'Italia," vol. ii. p. 78.

[2] Nardi, vol. i. pp. 104, 105, 115. In a Codex of the Magliabechian Library, cl. xxv. 23, we find the following list of prices during the famine of 1497: Wheat, 5 lire and 10 soldi the *staio;*[3] barley, 2 lire and 10 soldi the *staio;* oil, 24 lire the *soma;*[4] wine, 7 lire the *soma;* fowls, 3 lire the pair. At that time, 6 lire and 14 soldi made one broad gold florin; the florin answered to a modern zecchino, but the value of gold was much higher than at the present day. *Vide* Vettori, "Il fiorino antico illustrato": Florence, 1738.

[3] *Staio*, bushel. [4] *Soma*, an ass-load.

extent may men be blinded by party spirit, that the Arrabbiati seemed positively to rejoice in the general distress. They went about crying aloud: "At last we can all see how the Friar has deceived us. This is the happiness he predicted for Florence!" And they already began to speak of surrender, dared to publicly censure the new government, and declared that now was the time to overthrow it.

The Signory, uncertain what course to adopt, resorted to religious services, and ordained that the miracle-working image of the Madonna dell' Impruneta, whose help the people always implored in adversity, should be brought to Florence and solemnly borne in procession. But the only thing, all thought, that could really comfort the people at this terrible pass, was the voice of their Friar, and all were grieved and disappointed by his silence. Therefore the Signory once more appealed to him, beseeching and almost commanding him not to shrink from his duty to the Republic, and at least not to leave those whose greatest trust was in him, deprived of the consolation of his words in the midst of this dire peril and misery.

Having long been deeply moved by the general suffering and despair, Savonarola could not refuse the Signory's request, and on the 28th of October at last re-entered the pulpit. But how different was now the aspect worn by his flock! Present distress and dread of the future were printed on every face. All believed that the popular government was nearing its end, the triumph of the Arrabbiati at hand, and that famine and war would be followed by exile and death. All eyes were accordingly fixed upon him with looks of uncertainty and doubt. According to his frequent method he began his sermon in the form of a dialogue. "I was not to speak to ye; but I am here in obedience to the Signory, and to exhort ye once more to repentance. Are ye convinced? I tell ye

that I am convinced, and that everything we have said will be verified to the last iota. I am convinced that God is turning the brains of Italy, and that many will be deceived. This scourge seemeth to be one thing and will prove to be another. Art thou convinced? Of what? That tribulations are at hand? That thou art wrestling with Christ? Know that the good promised to Florence will come, and that evil-doers will suffer hell in this life and the next. Be assured, therefore, that unless ye change your life ye will suffer calamity. Thou still clingest to thy vices, O Florence; there is gambling and blasphemy; and thus ye draw down the scourge upon ye. Come, then! form this procession, it will be a goodly thing; and if ye implore God in a right spirit, I believe that some great grace will be vouchsafed to ye, and that we need stand in fear of none.

"But thou still puttest thy hope in men; thou still waitest for aid from the king that cometh not, and hath already been chastised even as we foretold to him;[1] but I rather say unto thee: *Maledictus homo qui confidit in homine.*—Well, then, O father, what must we do? First of all it is needful to return to God; and then to lay aside the idea thou hadst already conceived of changing the government and making surrender; to use every human precaution to aid thyself; to lend money to the city to the full extent of thy means, and lend it without usury. Finally, I tell ye: be ye all united together, casting aside all dissension. And if ye form a true union, hearken well to these words: May my very robe be forfeited if we now drive not off our enemies. I say that if ye do this, I will be the first to go forth against them, crucifix in hand, and our enemies shall fly before us even to Pisa and beyond. Have faith in my words, O Florence! Remember the many tears thou didst shed in this church

[1] Charles VIII., who had lost his last and then only son.

on the 6th of November,[1] and how then the revolution took place the same day, and thou wert made free! Remember how I prevailed on King Charles to depart from Florence; and when he returned from Naples, how I went, almost at full speed, to his camp, and threatened him; wherefore he left us unharmed. Have faith, then, in my words, and trust in the Lord. Happen what may, I fear nothing, if ye return to the Lord, and remain united, and do all that is humanly possible."

Then, once more addressing those who murmured against the new government, he said: "Now I will say another word to ye. Ye citizens are of three kinds. First come those who were exiles under the old government and yearned in vain for their country. Now ye have it; therefore be quiet. Secondly, those who had the halter already round their neck. Now ye have both safety and liberty; therefore be quiet. I stir not, father. That is not true; ye are all plotting, and I well know what ye would have. Lastly, come the citizens who hold office in this present Republic, and yet fail to enforce justice, for the city is full of gambling, blasphemy, lust, fornication, and disunion. To these I say: If ye do not maintain justice, the scourge will come upon ye. Finally I say to all—and I say it *in verbo Domini*—he that desireth a tyrant shall come to an evil end. Be ye united, therefore, arrange this procession, and trust in the Lord."[2] Thus spoke Savonarola that day; but while danger was still imminent, the blind confidence expressed in his words supplied the Arrabbiati with fresh reasons for ridiculing

[1] In the text: "At nine days from this." He said this on the 28th of October, and the expulsion of the Medici had taken place precisely on the 6th of November, 1494.

[2] "Predica del Reverendo Padre Frate Hieronymo da Ferrara, facta ildi di sancto Simone et Juda. Adì 28 d'Octobre, 1496, per commissione della Sygnoria di Firenze, essendo la ciptà in timore grandissimo per la venuta dello Imperadore." Without indication of time or place. This sermon is one of the series on Ruth and Micah, delivered in 1496.

the Friar and his adherents. Nevertheless the people derived great comfort from his sermons, and so long as his voice was heard in the pulpit no fresh misfortunes, they thought, could possibly befall Florence.

On the 30th of October the miraculous image of the Madonna dell' Impruneta was brought into the city escorted by a vast multitude, and so great a fervour of devotion had never before been shown by the Florentines. They paced the town slowly in contrite silence; large sums were given in alms; every face was sad, and the aspect of the populace testified to their half-starved condition and their dread of greater privations to come. The procession had reached the street of Por Santa Maria, when a messenger rode in by the San Frediano Gate, and, crossing the Carrara bridge, came galloping down the Lung' Arno towards the Palace of the Signoria, bearing an olive-branch in his hand. But meeting the crowd by the way, he was instantly surrounded; men seized his horse by the bridle and anxiously asked for news from Leghorn. It was good news, for suddenly, and as if by a miracle, the ships from Marseilles had arrived with the long-expected reinforcements and supplies of corn. They had been driven on their course by so fierce a wind that they had hardly been sighted at sea before they were skimming full sail into the port; while the Venetians could make no attempt to cut them out, having been compelled by the same wind to anchor off Meloria. No words can describe the frantic joy of the people. They pressed round the messenger with mighty shouts, and his words flew from mouth to mouth with many changes and exaggerations. Almost in an instant the city rang with the glad tidings, the bells pealed gaily, and in all the churches solemn thanksgivings were offered up for the miraculous succour received. Even to the Arrabbiati it seemed as though the Lord had come to rescue the

Republic from imminent ruin, and that this time Savonarola had proved a true prophet. His fame and influence were a thousandfold increased, and the populace went about crying: "The Friar's sermons have saved us again."[1]

After all, neither the supplies nor reinforcements were of much account. Only six hundred of the men engaged by the merchants had consented to join the expedition, and, as we have said, some of the vessels chartered parted from the rest directly they were out of port, sailed elsewhere in the hope of swelling their gains, and were all wrecked. Accordingly, a rumour had spread that no chance of succour remained. Even now only five ships and two galleons had come in with corn and men. But their unexpected mode of arrival and at so opportune a moment produced the most encouraging effect, not only on Florence, but Leghorn. In the latter city the inhabitants were stirred to new hope, and firing all their guns in token of joy, they sallied forth against the Pisans, and at the same time hastened to strengthen the bastion of Ponte a Stagno, just as it was on the point of being seized by the enemy. The imperial troops, panic-stricken by the tremendous cannonade from the walls, and exaggerated rumours of the reinforcements from France, were easily put to flight with great slaughter, and left many horses and prisoners in the hands of the Livornese.

Meanwhile, on the 1st of November, Savonarola again appeared in the pulpit, and, referring to this unlooked-for good fortune, extolled the loving-kindness of God, inculcated the necessity of faith, of abandoning vice, of being constant in prayer, and of trusting in none save the Lord.

[1] Nardi, vol. i. p. 105. Landucci also records the event in his "Diario," p. 139, and concludes by saying: "That it was granted by God, in answer to our earnest prayers to the Virgin. The news arrived when She entered Florence."

He next sought to moderate the excessive gladness of the people. "It is not meet to let yourselves be so easily overcome whether by joy or by grief: ye must neglect no human precautions, but prepare more than ever for war." On the 2nd of November, being All Souls' Day, he made another and most successful sermon on "The Art of Dying a Good Death."[1] He said that the true Christian ought to keep the idea of death always before his eyes, and that by duly reflecting thereon, all might be led to righteousness. He depicted in very vivid colours the state of the soul at that supreme moment, giving a minute and ingenious analysis of all the passions and regrets by which man is then assailed. "Death," he exclaimed, "is the most solemn moment of our life: it is then that the evil one makes his last attack upon us. It is as though he were always playing chess with man, and waiting the approach of death to give him checkmate. He who wins at that moment wins the battle of life. O my brethren, for what do we live in this world, save to learn to die a good death!"

[1] These two sermons are included among those upon Ruth, Micah, and David, but the second has been often published separately. Audin mentions three fifteenth-century editions, and the Guicciardini Catalogue four, and all are illustrated with fine engravings. With regard to these and many fifteenth- and sixteenth-century engravings in Savonarola's works, see the interesting study by Mons. A. Gruyer, "Les illustrations des écrits de Jérôme Savonarole." Paris: Firmin Didot, 1879. Mons. Gruyer maintains that these illustrations are all by unknown engravers, and does not admit that Botticelli may have been one of them, since, contrary to other art critics, he fails to discover any traces of that artist's manner. Nevertheless Vasari asserts that Botticelli printed many of his designs, "though in a bad style, owing to faulty blocks," and he mentions, as one of the best, Savonarola's Triumph of Faith, adding that Botticelli became so fanatic an adherent of the Friar, as to forsake painting on that account. In the "Giornate" of Lorenzo Violi we find it more than once repeated that Sandro's workshop was the meeting-place of many good-for-nothings, many of whom were Arrabbiati—Dofto Spini among them—who all spoke ill of the Friar. Simone Botticelli, the artist's brother, was often present at these meetings and noted down their conversations in his "Cronica," a work often cited in terms of praise by the followers of Savonarola, but which has hitherto eluded our research.

He suggested that every one should keep some picture over his bed to remind him constantly of the peril of death. He minutely described some pictures of this kind imagined by himself, and the people listened to him with the deepest attention. These suggested designs were afterwards executed and engraved in many editions of this sermon, by some of the best artists of the age, and Sandro Botticelli is said to have been one of the number.

SANDRO BOTTICELLI.

Savonarola also gave fresh encouragement to the people that day, urging them to remain united and to labour for the defence of their country. After this sermon he again ceased preaching, and regretted having given the Pope a pretext for fresh complaints. For this time, the Borgia no longer confined himself to complaints.

Throughout the year Savonarola had been encompassed by snares. Even in April the Duke Ludovico, while zealously feigning to be his friend, had contrived, by

means of his agents, to intercept the Friar's correspondence with the King of France, had noised the matter abroad, and sent copies of the letters in various directions in order to prejudice the allies against Savonarola. He even communicated them to the Duke of Ferrara in the hope of destroying the great friendship the latter was known to entertain for Savonarola.[1] But he failed in this intent, for the Friar told the Ferrarese orator that it was long since he had written to the king, and that these letters were undoubtedly forged. Accordingly the Duke continued to correspond with him, writing that he, too, was endeavouring to purge his city "of its vices as much as possible, and restore it to Christian living."[2] And also, through the same ambassador, he warned the Friar to be well on his guard againt the snares which were laid for him, because "nets are cast far out to drag the fish in shore."[3] Savonarola was very grateful to him for this, and continually sent him good advice. Their correspondence was not only friendly, but carried on in a species of cypher, whenever it turned upon politics. Four months later Ludovico repeated the same stratagem by publishing other forged letters which he pretended to have intercepted. One of these, forwarded to the ambassador of France, teemed with abuse of that personage. The Frenchman was furious, demanded satisfaction from the Signory, and threatened to leave Florence; but it all came to nothing. Nor was Ludovico more successful with the forgeries he had sent to Bologna, Ferrara, and elsewhere.[4]

[1] A. Cappelli, "Frà Girolamo Savonarola," p. 73, doc. c.

[2] Ibid. p. 75, doc. cii. [3] Ibid. p. 77, doc. cv.

[4] *Vide* Professor Del Lungo's previously quoted work ("Archivio Storico Italiano," new series, vol. xviii. part ii.), documents xi.–xiv. Landucci alludes to these events at page 137 of his "Diario," and concludes by exclaiming: "The poor Friar had so many enemies!" *Vide* also the Appendix to the Italian edition, doc. xxxii.

The Pope, however, did not condescend to such childish measures. On hearing the news of the help received by Leghorn and of the Friar's first sermon, he immediately issued another brief, dated the 7th of November, and addressed to all the Dominicans of Tuscany.[1] In this he no longer insisted on the reunion of St. Mark's with the Lombard Congregation, but on its entire separation from the latter, and its junction with all the other convents in Tuscany and Rome, in a new Tusco-Roman Congregation, with a special vicar of its own, who was, however, to be subject to the authority of the Vicar-General in Rome. The Pope entrusted the nomination of a vicar for the first two years to the Vicar-General and the Cardinal of Naples, who, though hitherto favourable to Savonarola and his community, was now their declared foe. The execution of this project was entrusted to Francesco Mei, an enemy of the Friar, but he was soon given a coadjutor in the person of Padre Giacomo di Sicilia, who was, on the contrary, very well disposed towards him,[2] and was appointed vicar of the new congregation. These subtleties were devised the better to entrap Savonarola, to which end the Pope was now devoting all his craft. But as he wished to achieve it without betraying his personal hostility to the Friar, he had purposely re-opened the question of the convents, while dexterously avoiding the objections Savonarola had already raised to the plan in September, 1495. Thus, he neither referred the Friar's case to the Lombard vicar,

[1] This brief is still unpublished, and is preserved in the Riccardi Library, Cod. 2053, sheet cxviii. It is a very important document, since Savonarola's failure to obey it was the principal cause, or rather pretext for his excommunication, as may be seen by the terms of the brief. Ignorance of the existence of this brief has caused confusion as to the chronological order of the others, and consequently of Savonarola's replies. A copy of it is given in the Appendix to the Italian edition, doc. xxxiii.

[2] Gherardi, "Nuovi Documenti," p. 75 and fol.

nor ordained the junction of the two hostile congregations, but, on the contrary, caused a man who had been most friendly to Savonarola's community to be appointed as vicar; and finally, as was set forth in the brief, gave an opportunity for the application of the new reform to all Tuscany and the Roman States.[1] But these were mere feints, his real purpose being totally different. For once Savonarola became subject to the authority of the new vicar, who was only a subordinate of the General of the Order in Rome, he would be deprived of the independence for which he had sought separation from the Lombard Order, would likewise lose the command over his own community giving him so much power in Florence, and, best of all, could then be relegated to any other monastery at a moment's notice. This had always been the Pope's purpose at bottom. Moreover, it was plainly evident that, when joined to the new congregation, and subjected to the pressure of a host of other convents, more or less jealous and hostile, St. Mark's, instead of being able to introduce its reforms among them, might easily fall into backsliding.

For all these reasons Savonarola, instead of obeying, resumed his pen and wrote his "Apology for the Congregation of St. Mark's." But now addressing the public instead of replying to the Pope, he adopted a very frank and daring tone. "I will not pause," he said, "to refute the charges brought against me as to my

[1] "Then came a brief ordaining that all the convents of Tuscany should be united in a single congregation including St. Mark's and all convents subject to St. Mark's. At first, in his other brief, he (the Pope) commanded us to rejoin the Lombard Congregation, from which he had previously divided us: it is now desired that we are to form part of the Tuscan Congregation, and now here, now there. This seems to me to resemble the defence of the king in a game of chess, the which king, when in check, moves to the next square and then back again: verily the tricks of the wicked are manifest" (Sermon of the 18th of February, 1498).

doctrines, since I have frequently replied to these, and am preparing to disprove them entirely in my work on the Triumph of the Cross, that will speedily be given to the light. But I reply to the command now imposed on me to join the new congregation. First of all, I have no right to do this solely on my own authority, but need the consent of 250 other monks, who have all written to the Pope to the contrary effect; and I am neither able nor willing to oppose their decision since I hold it to be honest and just." He then went on to adduce his reasons for believing that this junction would have a relaxing and corrupting influence on the severe discipline of St. Mark's, and thus prove specially hurtful to the youthful brethren now forming the majority in the convent. "If the other communities are in no need of reform, why should they desire to join us? And if they join us in order that we may reform them, we have already so many untrained youths among us that we have hard work to instruct them. Therefore, union with other convents would bring nought but disorder and confusion to all, and more particularly to ourselves." He then referred to the deplorable enmity existing between the various convents, and the mortal danger he had incurred from that cause both at Siena and Pisa. And he concluded by saying: "This union is therefore impossible, unreasonable, and hurtful, nor can the brethren of St. Mark's be bound to agree to it, insomuch as superiors may not issue commands contrary to the rules of the Order, nor contrary to the law of charity and the welfare of our souls. We must therefore take it for granted that our superiors have been misled by false reports, and resist meanwhile a command that is contrary to charity. Neither must we allow ourselves to be cowed by threats nor excommunications, but be ready to face death rather than submit to that which would be poison and perdition

to our souls. When our conscience revolts from some command received from our superiors, we must first resist and humbly make protest, the which we have already done; but should this means fail, we must then follow the example of St. Paul, *qui coram omnibus restitit in faciem Petri.*"[1] Thus, after a very brief truce, Savonarola was again at open war with the Pope.

Meanwhile, after the one stroke of luck in the unexpected succour from France, the fortunes of the war again declined, especially at Leghorn; and but for the jealous disputes between Ludovico and the Venetians, the siege would long since have been brought to a successful end. But, for the second time Providence seemed determined to intervene in favour of the Florentines. The same *libeccio* (south-easterly wind) that at the end of October had wafted the Marseilles ships safely into port, now, towards the 15th of November, began to blow with so much fury, that the whole of the Venetian fleet was driven aground. The Admiral's galley, with the Emperor on board, was cast broadside against the Rocca Nuova, all its crew and armament wrecked, and Maximilian himself barely saved. Two other vessels suffered the same fate, and the others were too severely injured to be of any use. The shipwrecked men all surrendered to the enemy in order to save their lives, so that great numbers of prisoners were taken that day at Leghorn, and sufficient booty to enrich many of the citizens. And now Maximilian, weary of fighting, as he said, "against God and man," withdrew ingloriously from the enterprise that he had begun and conducted with so little prudence. Nor would he give any explanation of this hasty resolve, nor

[1] "Apologeticum Fratrum Congregationis S. Marci de Florentia." It was printed in Florence in 1497, and then reprinted in 1674 by Quétif in his "Additiones" to G. F. Pico's biography of Savonarola. In this pamphlet all the arguments for and against the union are minutely analyzed and weighed.

make any mention of it, until after his arrival in Lombardy, when he complained bitterly of the conduct of the Venetians and the Moor. Fortune seemed to be against him to the last; for when, during his retreat, a considerable band of his Germans joined a number of Pisans in attacking the castle of Lari, Alessandro degli Alessandri, the Florentine commissary, reserved his fire until they were all in the moat, and then shot down the greater part of them. Thus between October and November the fortunes of the Florentines took a prosperous turn; and again, as if by a miracle, they were delivered from the most imminent danger.

Returning to the pulpit on the 26th of November, Savonarola reminded his hearers of their past trials, of the discouragement in which they had been plunged, of the divine mercy that had come to their aid, and exhorted all to give the most heartfelt and grateful thanks to the Lord. He then went on to recapitulate the history and merits of the popular government, again compared the different stages of its formation with the seven days of the Creation, reasserted his own prophetic mission, and promised to preach during the coming Advent.

On the next day, in fact, he began the first eight of those sermons on Ezekiel, which show that he had now relinquished all hope of truce or reconciliation with the Pope. "O Lord, teach me the way of adversity! I come to preach this morning solely to repeat that which I have before said, and I herewith confirm it afresh, and will give my life for it. . . . Should I retract," he continued, turning to the people, "thou mayest say that this Friar contradicteth God, that I speak lies, and thou mayest stone me and cast me from the pulpit." He recurred to his gift of prophecy; again predicted that the scourge was at hand, "the which will be all the

greater, the less the people remain faithful to religion and liberty." [1]

The most important of these eight sermons was the sixth, delivered in the Duomo on the 13th of December by special request and in the presence of the Signory. Beginning, as was then almost his daily wont, with introductory remarks on the goodness and mercy of the Lord, Savonarola went on to enumerate all the blessings which had been poured upon Florence. "This is Thine own city, O Lord; Thou hast chosen and blessed it; Thou hast enlightened it with virtuous living: hast infused Thy faith and Thy light in the soul of this people. In addition to spiritual gifts Thou hast likewise vouchsafed it temporal blessings. And the first and greatest of these is the freedom Thou hast restored to it. For this is one of the highest of blessings; *quia non bene pro toto libertas venditur auro.* Before, the city was subject to the will of one man; now it is no longer fettered thus. If that man said: Do evil, then evil had to be done. If another tyrant said: Marry thy daughter to that man, thou wert constrained to obey; or: break off that connection, and thou wert constrained to break it off; or: give

[1] "Prediche sopra Ezechiele," Venice, 1520. The first eight were delivered in Advent, 1496; the others in Lent, 1497. *Vide* the first sermon. These discourses, although collected by Violi, were, like the series on the Psalms, given to the world in a very incomplete form. Violi himself explains this in his "Giornate," sheet 19. He collected the series on the Psalms in 1494, when little practised in the art of making verbatim reports, and first indeed noting them down for his own use, being as yet little concerned in Savonarola's affairs. But being encouraged by many friends to pursue the task, he employed greater care in reporting the rest of the sermons. And in 1496, being then engaged in publishing the series on Amos, he had only time for a very brief compendium of that upon Ezechiel. These, moreover, were originally much shorter than the others, as Savonarola himself stated in Sermon ix. Violi afterwards gave both this series and that on the Psalms to Luca Bettini, who was very urgent in the matter, and who then published them without Violi's permission, and much to his annoyance. Bettini makes some allusion to this his own preface.

me that gold, and thou hadst to give it. In those days, this Thy people was beaten with rods, and yet had to suffer patiently." In this fashion the preacher went through the whole history of the liberation of Florence, from the expulsion of Piero de' Medici to the departure of Maximilian in order to demonstrate the goodness of the Lord to the Florentines. He then exhorted them to virtue, and reproved their coldness in coming daily to his sermons, without practising what he taught them. "Preach to these men as one may, they have taken the habit of listening well and yet acting ill. This habit hath become a second nature, and they continue to listen without obeying. And it is as hard to change this course of things as to change the course of the waters. Thou hast made a habit of always hearing the command: do justice, do justice. Thou wilt become like unto a rook on a steeple, that, at the first stroke of the church bell, taketh alarm and hath fear, but then, when accustomed to the sound, percheth quietly on the bell, however loudly it be rung."

He also reproved the people for their ingratitude towards God, "for the freedom He hath given, ye are doing your best to destroy by continual murmurs and slanderings, and by the continual plots being hatched within and without the walls. Ungrateful people! God hath granted thee this Great Council, and thou seekest to overthrow it by admitting the enemies of the country. Such was by no means my intent. In the beginning, it is true that I allowed all to enter therein, because liberty was then fresh, and it was needful to put it to trial; but I by no means intended to find room for the bad, as is now the practice. Magnificent Signori, I tell ye that ye must keep your eye on this council, prune it and polish it, and see whether it be well that all its members should be granted admittance. Of necessity it must be a numerous council, but some limits should be put to it, if only to expel

from its midst the enemies of the country. Nevertheless I hold not with those who would abstain from voting until this new reform be accomplished, and still less am I agreed with those who would have the magistrates chosen by lot. This is contrary to freedom, I tell ye. Thou art a bad Christian! go, read the history written by Lionardo d'Arezzo, where he sayeth that all went well with the city until its rulers were elected by lot, the which practice was devised by ambitious men. And there be always wicked ones of this sort, who go whispering these suggestions in men's ears. Such be they that plot against thy city, holding secret meetings within and without the walls together with priests and friars, and giving fine suppers and feasts. And all their speech is against the Friar: if they eat bread, they talk of the Friar; meat, and still of the Friar; if drinking wine, again of the Friar." "Take heed, O Florence, of these gatherings the sole purport of which is to ruin thy liberty. This poor Friar here hath to fight the whole world single-handed. Well, as to myself, I tell ye: Summon doctors, prelates, whomsoever ye will; I am ready to fight against all. I can tell ye that in the Order of St. Dominic there hath never been a heretic; but, on the contrary, many of its members have wrought great reforms in Italy. Ye cannot fail to remember Cardinal Latino, Angelo Acciaioli, and Sant' Antonino! Even so will it be now; but first of all it is needful to enforce justice and show severity. 'Tis your part, O Signori, to look to these things! Order an escort of armed men, and go sword in hand; should this not suffice, appeal to the people and make yourselves feared. Let all magistrates who leave crime unpunished, suffer the penalty of guilt. Do justice, therefore, magnificent Signori; justice, Signori of the Eight; justice, magistrates of Florence; justice, men and women; let all cry for justice!" [1]

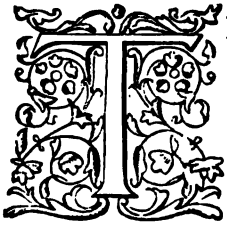
[1] "Prediche sopra Ezechiele." *Vide* Sermon vi.

In this way the year 1496 was brought to a close. The Florentine Republic had marvellously escaped an infinite number of perils; Savonarola's name and authority were again in the ascendant, and the popular party was again absolute master of the situation. But at the same time the struggle with Rome now wore an increasingly threatening aspect; and the Pope's hatred for the Friar and the Government created by him, burnt with inextinguishable fury. Moreover, so many enemies had been detected in the very bosom of the Republic, so many plots on the part of the Arrabbiati and the Bigi, that Savonarola perceived that not only were severe measures unavoidable, but that it would likewise be necessary to modify the form of the Greater Council, in order to save the Government from falling into the hands of men whose sole purpose was to destroy it, and who had merely profited by the indulgence hitherto shown them, to conspire with impunity against the freedom of their land.

# CHAPTER VI.

*FRANCESCO VALORI IS MADE GONFALONIER, AND PROPOSES SEVERAL NEW LAWS. CARNIVAL CELEBRATED BY A BURNING OF THE VANITIES. PURCHASE OF THE MEDICI LIBRARY BY THE MONASTERY OF ST. MARK. SAVONAROLA'S IDEAS ON THE BEAUTIFUL; HIS DEFENCE OF POETRY; HIS COMPOSITIONS IN VERSE.*

(1497.)



THE events of the past year having again brought the popular party into favour, Francesco Valori was elected Gonfalonier of Justice for January and February, 1497, with a Signory altogether devoted to him. For a man of milder temper and less ardent passions, this would have been the moment to impose a check upon the Arrabbiati and the Bigi. But Valori, being always carried away by his impetuosity, now refused to listen to Savonarola's words, when the latter suggested that the Greater Council should be somewhat restricted in order to exclude from it all those who were conspiring against the Republic. On the contrary, he determined to increase its numbers by getting a new law passed, qualifying citizens to become members of the council at the age of twenty-four instead of thirty years. He thought to strengthen the Republic by admitting the people to a larger and more absolute

share in its government; but results proved contrary to his wishes, inasmuch as the new law gave admittance to the corrupt and turbulent youth of the Arrabbiati, who were specially incensed against Savonarola, his new government, and the new mode of life he had introduced. Balls and festivities were forbidden, and the Carnival destroyed, they had no longer any purpose in life, and were therefore the ringleaders of every plot laid against the Friar. For the better execution of their plans, they had banded together, under the command of Doffo (Ridolfo) Spini; went about armed, provoked quarrels, committed acts of violence, and had accordingly won from the people the title of *Compagnacci*, or Bad Fellows. The new law, by qualifying them to enter the council, furnished them with a powerful weapon which they did not hesitate to use for the injury of the Republic.[1]

Valori, however, seemed blind to these perils, and in fact, about the same time, we find the Signory proposing another and equally improvident measure. This was the law of the *Decima scalata*, or graduated tithes, corresponding with what would now be termed a progressive tax. It naturally encountered great opposition from all men of fortune, but was strenuously pushed by the popular party. Hence passions became heated, one side in urging on, the other in combating the Bill; and it is strange to find the same arguments alleged, the same speeches made, which we have heard repeated in our own time.[2]

[1] Jacopo Nardi, vol. i. pp. 119–120.

[2] "La Decima scalata in Firenze nel, 1497; da manoscritti inediti di Messer Francesco di Guicciardini." Florence, 1849. These are two long and excellent speeches, supposed by the author to have been delivered before the Greater Council by a supporter and an opponent of the new law. The character of the Florentine man of the people and the nature of his eloquence are vividly pourtrayed in them. They could not have been delivered in the council, where, as we have already noted, no free discussion of a Bill was allowed; and therefore, like many of Guicciardini's speeches, must be entirely fictitious; but nevertheless

On the popular side it was averred—"That equality of taxation consists in imposing equal burdens upon all, and that even the new law failed to provide for this, inasmuch as while one tithe burdens the poor by taxing the necessities of life, two or three more only tax the superfluities of the rich.[1] This country of ours," the speech went on to say, "is like unto a piece of cloth of sufficient length to provide reasonable mantles for all; but that has been so unequally divided, that whereas one man has a mantle he may fold about him three times, and trail on the ground more than a yard at his heels, another has too short a measure for even a beggar's cloak." It then concluded with a burst of invective against the rich and the injury they wrought on the poor by their superfluous expenses. On the other side, it was urged by men of greater moderation, that—"Equality demands that no citizen should be able to oppress another, and that all should be equally subject to the laws; but to say that all must be equal in everything would be a blind interpretation of the word, very much like making a house with all the rooms on the same floor, and would lead to a state of chaos fit to overwhelm a whole world, much less a single city. Do ye not see that by these improvident laws ye sow discord, give rise to discussion, and throw open the doors to Piero de' Medici?" Whether the Signory was persuaded by these arguments to withdraw the law, or whether it was repulsed by the majority, it is certain that the *Decima scalata* was never passed, and that after this things went more smoothly.

have a right to be considered historical, as faithful versions of the opinions of either party. They were afterwards republished in Guicciardini's "Opere Inedite."

[1] The new law was to the effect that citizens should pay one-tenth only on an income of five florins, and that for every additional five florins a quarter of a tenth should be exacted in addition to the ordinary tax, but that the maximum to be paid should in no case exceed three-tenths.

During this period Savonarola was living in silent seclusion, employed in revising his "Triumph of the Cross," and writing a number of pamphlets, which he desired to publish quickly in order to extend the diffusion of his doctrines, and gain fresh champions in the violent struggle with Rome that, as he well knew by letters from that city, was not only inevitable, but imminent. On this account he had entrusted the direction of spiritual concerns to Frà Domenico of Pescia, whose fervour and energy in religious affairs equalled those of Valori in politics. This monk had so blind an admiration for his master, that he not only felt the most implicit faith in his prophecies, but believed him capable of working the greatest miracles, and would have joyfully laid down his life in support of any one of Savonarola's utterances. But unfortunately his extravagant zeal and unbounded credulity made him equally ready to go to perilous lengths.

While men's minds and public affairs were in this state, carnival time was drawing near, and the Arrabbiati were preparing to attempt a revival of the old orgies, of the scandalous Medicean festivities, and, above all, of that game of stones to which they well knew the populace to be specially addicted. Thereupon Frà Domenico, being stirred to great wrath, determined to do his best to thwart their intent. He preached daily sermons, addressed epistles to the children,[1] and caused new regulations to be passed

[1] Burlamacchi (at page 105) expressly states that Savonarola had first given a good turn to the children's minds, and then, "seeing the great change in those children, thought it well to furnish them with some rules, so that they might persevere in righteous living; and being unable to attend to the matter himself by reason of his weighty occupations, committed the care of it to Frà Domenico of Pescia; and the said Friar, frequently gathering the children together, continued to nourish their souls by short sermons of a devout and spiritual kind. *Vide* "Epistola di Frate Domenico mandata a' fanciulli Fiorentini," dated "Florentie in Sancto Marco die iii. Septembris MCCCCLXXXXVII.," and also a printed copy without indication of time or place.

by the Signory enforcing the reforms initiated by Savonarola during the past year.[1]

We have already described the grand procession of the preceding Lent, when the children marched through the streets singing Girolamo Benivieni's hymn, and collecting considerable sums for the Monte di Pietà. But now, guided by their chiefs, they went about the city in bands, and, knocking at the doors of rich and poor, demanded the surrender ofeverything they styled *vanities* or *anathemæ*. These comprised all books or pictures of an indecent nature, carnival masks and costumes. On receipt of anything of this kind, they repeated a special prayer of Savonarola's composition, and passed on to the next house. In this way quantities of different objects were collected, intended to serve for a new festivity devised by Frà Domenico and Savonarola. In fact, on the last day of carnival (7th of February) there was no longer any thought of pagan orgies, and all were prepared for a religious solemnity. In the morning, men, women, and children attended a great Mass celebrated by Savonarola, and all received the communion from his hands. After returning to their homes and taking a frugal meal, they all joined, at a later hour, in a grand procession through the town. First came, borne by four angels, a beautiful figure of the infant Jesus, carved by Donatello, its left hand pointing to a crown of thorns, its right raised in the act of benediction. Close behind marched a prodigious train, some clothed in white, many bearing red crosses and chanting religious hymns and lauds. Alms-collectors went round with silver trays asking contributions for *St. Martin's good men*, who obtained more gold on that day than throughout the whole year. At last the procession

[1] On the 25th of January, 1496 (common style), a provision was passed by the Consiglio Maggiore, laying down certain rules as to children's attire. Florence Archives, "Provvisioni, Registro," cl. ii. dist. ii. cod. 187, sheet 32t.

reached the Piazza, where a great octangular pyramid had been built up, measuring about 60 feet in height, and 240 in circumference at the base. It was formed of seven stages,[1] on which all the different *vanities* collected during the carnival were arranged; the apex of the pile was crowned by a monstrous figure, supposed to personify the old King Carnival, and the interior of the structure was packed with combustibles. The Piazza was sooned thronged with people, and the children being arranged on the Ringhiera outside the Palace and under the Loggia de' Lanzi, were continually employed in singing devotional songs and invectives against the carnival.[2] At a given signal the four guardians of the pile fired it at four points; smoke and flames instantly burst forth; the trumpeters of the Signory sounded a charge; the bells of the Palace pealed forth; and the multitude vented their joy in as mighty a shout as though the arch enemy of mankind were finally vanquished. Thus ended the procession and carnival of 1497.[3]

Of course, those who blamed all that was done by the direction or advice of Savonarola and the monks of St. Mark's did not refrain from inveighing against the destruction of the *vanities*, and declared that it would have been far better to have sold them for the benefit of the poor.[4] Strangely enough, the old historians barely allude to these accusations, and even in the almost numberless writings in favour or abuse of the Friar, in which every subject and fact was discussed lending itself to his attack or defence, this event was almost entirely

[1] Burlamacchi says there were fifteen, but Benivieni tells us they were seven in number, corresponding with the seven mortal sins.

[2] One of these, beginning, "Da che tu ci hai, Signore," was by G. Benivieni.

[3] Both the "Vita Latina," at sheet 32 and fol., and Burlamacchi, at p. 113 and fol., give a detailed account of this bonfire, which is also mentioned by contemporary biographers and historians.

[4] Nardi, vol. i. p. 114.

passed over. But this has not been the case with modern writers.

When the love for antiquities first began to revive, and then developed into so absorbing a passion, as almost to make it seem that men were born for the sole purpose of editing ancient manuscripts and restoring old pictures and monuments—the *Burning of the Vanities* became a theme of rhetorical display for all who treated of those times. Savonarola's name was loaded with abuse as that of a superstitious barbarian, the wilful destroyer of our ancient grandeur, and he was accordingly pourtrayed as a fanatic monk who sought to overwhelm the Renaissance with the gloom of the Middle Ages. If some old manuscript went astray, it was at once declared to have been burnt by Savonarola! . If some edition of Boccaccio became specially scarce, every one was persuaded that the Friar had destroyed it![1] If an ancient statue chanced to be lost, of course the Piagnoni had reduced it to ashes at the *Burning of the Vanities.*

But what fire could have totally consumed marble statues; and was it credible that the children should have collected a whole edition of Boccaccio? Nevertheless, the subject was so excellent a peg for bursts of rhetoric, and so admirably in sympathy with the public feeling, that few could withstand the temptation of assuming the defence of our great monuments of antiquity, and making long speeches on the fatal effects of fanaticism. It should also be noted that the first, though innocent, author of these excesses was no other than Burlamacchi,[2]

[1] This was generally believed to be the fate of the Valdarfer edition of which only three copies are now known to exist. One of the three was sold in Paris in 1812 for the sum of 52,000 francs. *Vide* note to Nardi, vol. i. p. 140, Arbib. edition.

[2] It is needless to repeat that the same remarks apply to the "Vita Latina," of which Burlamacchi's Chronicle is an almost literal translation. I will only add that in the Latin original, after the words, "libri poetarum in utraque lingua," a marginal note is given, as if in correction—"et

who, with a *naïveté* peculiar to himself, gave a lengthy, highly-coloured, and exaggerated account of the *Burning*, describing it as a thoroughly religious and Christian deed. Neither he nor any other of the old biographers seem able to say enough in praise of their hero's holy zeal. Nevertheless, Burlamacchi's words by no means serve to justify the extremes modern writers have indulged in, since among the many objects of more or less value described by the chronicler, there is not one of any definite or intrinsic worth.[1] But, at the end of his narrative, after having exultingly dilated on the number of works of art and volumes of the old poets comprised among the vanities, he finally says that a Venetian merchant having offered to buy them for the sum of 20,000 crowns, the man's portrait was put on top of the pile beside the image of the carnival, and burnt with all the rest. It was only natural that the offer of so large and, in those days, almost fabulous an amount, should have given free scope to men's fancy and led them to suppose that things of the most precious kind had been destroyed in the fire.

Savonarola's friends and foes having shown—although from opposite motives—equal exaggeration on this point, it became very difficult to ascertain the exact truth. It was necessary to keep in mind that Burlamacchi, although very careful in the narration of events seen by himself or described to him by eye-witnesses, is always inaccurate and exaggerated in his figures. In speaking of the procession of the children, he makes their number almost equal that of the whole population of Florence; and esti-

omnia impudica ad legendum" (sheet 40). The same exaggerated tone is maintained throughout the account, and always for the purpose of marking approval.

[1] In fact, the "Vita Latina" and Burlamacchi both name many objects, but always in general terms. It would seem that these were either clothes and masks, or portraits of notorious women, gold-decorated books, and similar things.

mates the sums of money collected by them at an altogether incredible amount. Then, too, his very inaccurate calculation of years and dates has been the principal cause of the confusion as to the events of Savonarola's life, and compelled us to refer to original documents for all chronological details. What value can then be assigned to judgments based on the calculations of so faulty a writer? By what process of logic can we blindly credit Burlamacchi's figures in this instance, when obliged to distrust him on so many other points? And is it at all probable that Savonarola would have been allowed, not only without opposition, but with general consent, to burn ancient statues, or valuable manuscripts, at a time when his fellow-countrymen were making long and hazardous journeys in quest of these treasures and devoting life and substance to their acquisition? How are we to believe that in the days of Marsilio Ficino and Angelo Poliziano, no voice should have been raised in his condemnation? For, were not the leading artists and scholars of the time still counted among the most fervent of his admirers? Is it in the least credible that Girolamo Benivieni, the poet and man of learning, would then have extolled the Burning, and written songs for the occasion; that Nardi, the translator of Livy and most ardent admirer of the ancients, should have made such slighting and contemptuous allusion to all who objected to it; or that a man of Guicciardini's stamp would have written so eulogistic an account of it? [1]

[1] Guicciardini says: "His efforts for the enforcement of morality were most holy and admirable; nor was there ever so much goodness and religion in Florence as in his day; and after his death it was seen that every good thing that was done had been introduced and supported by him." And he adds, further on, that the children "went about during Carnival collecting cards, dice, cosmetics, paintings, and *indecent* books, and burnt them publicly on the Piazza of the Signoria, having first celebrated the precise day that was formerly one of numberless iniquities, by a very holy and pious procession" ("Storia Fiorentina," in the "Opere inedite," vol. iii. p. 179). Was Guicciardini ever known to be fanatically opposed to art and letters?

But, in stripping off the wild exaggerations with which it is overlaid, we have no intention of contesting the reality of the fact, and only seek to determine its precise value. We cannot exactly ascertain what were the *vanities* burnt on this occasion; but they undoubtedly consisted for the most part of fancy dresses, masks, and other carnival accessories, inasmuch as the sole object of the bonfire was to suppress immorality, and abolish the game of stones and other festivities formerly carried on in Carnival. We are justified in thinking that, to mark his disapprobation of corrupt manners, Savonarola may have burnt a few volumes with indecent illustrations; some copies of the Decameron, then the favourite reading, even of cloistered nuns; and some of the more obscene poetical works then freely circulated among women and children, and against which he had energetically thundered from the pulpit. We cannot completely exonerate him on this head: but although the learned may lament the loss of some precious

It should also be specially remarked that Girolamo Benivieni, an eye-witness of the *Burning*, makes no allusion, in his description of it, to the destruction of any manuscript or printed book. He speaks in general terms of "lewd, vain, and detestable things, . . . of various panels and canvases covered with precious but indecent paintings; of some casts and sculptures of considerable beauty." He adds, in a tone of great satisfaction, that these pictures and statues were calculated to be worth "several thousand ducats," and that he had held in his own hand "a painted head," for which ten ducats had been offered, and a chess-board, said to be worth forty ducats, without its men; but he mentions no manuscripts. Finally, he says that, should any one regard this Burning as a childish affair, "let him, if a Christian, put off the spectacles of Satan's pride, and assume those of Christ's humility, before passing judgment" ("Comento di Hierony. B. sopra a più sue canzone e sonetti dello Amore et della Bellezza Divina," at sheet cxv. and fol. Printed in Florence, on the viii. day of September, MCCCC.).

A reprint of the "Canzona d'un Piagnone pel Bruciamento delle vanità, nel carnevale del 1498" (Florence, Grazzini, 1864), has been brought out by Professor del Lungo, who, in his preface, alludes to my words, agrees in my opinion on the subject, and remarks that this Canzone affords another proof that "the Piagnoni had no intention of destroying artistic marvels, some of which they themselves had helped to produce."

volumes, and the philosopher deplore the human weakness that often combats wrong by wrong, and old fanaticism by new, history reminds us that such has ever been the characteristic of men inspired by a great and excessive zeal for religion. Can we estimate the destruction wrought by the iconoclasts in the East, or the early Christians in Rome? Nor must the consideration of the highly-civilized times in which he lived make us judge Savonarola too harshly, when we see that in the following century neither churches nor pictures were spared by the far more relentless zeal of the image-breakers of Germany and Holland. Did not John Calvin live in the age of Leo X. and Francis I., and was he not a man of considerable culture, lofty genius, and iron strength of will? He too became the head of a republic, without, however, the merit of being its founder; and yet, while the declared champion of freedom and tolerance, he not only inflicted the severest punishments on all who committed blasphemy or worked on Sunday, but even cast women into prison for arranging their hair in an immodest fashion![1] Was it not he who, in the year 1553, had the innocent and ill-starred Servetus burnt to death at Geneva? It is no part of true historic criticism to put aside, when judging Savonarola, all remembrance of human passion and religious excitement.

But why stir sad memories of the past, all equally humiliating to humanity? It is needless to recall these instances of religious fanaticism in Savonarola's defence. Should the arguments we have alleged fail to show how unjustly he was accused of barbarous destruction, there is the evidence of facts in his favour; and one special fact occurring at the very time of the

[1] In the Geneva Archives the Decree is still preserved by which a woman was sentenced to imprisonment, *parce qu'elle n'avait pas les cheveux abattus.*

Burning of the Vanities, will suffice to set the question at rest.

We have seen the financial straits to which the Republic had been lately reduced. It was totally unable to settle the numerous debts on the Medici's confiscated possessions. Accordingly it was first compelled to borrow heavily on them and then put them up to sale. Among these possessions was the celebrated library, a rare treasure of learning, which, after being deposited in the convent of St. Mark and subsequently in the Palace, was now exposed to the same fate. Even had any citizen of Florence been rich enough to buy it, he certainly would not have thrown it open to the public. And as private individuals were no less embarrassed than the State, there was imminent danger of this splendid collection being dispersed, and even of passing into foreign hands; since one of the numerous creditors of the Republic chanced to be no other than the French diplomat, Philippe de Commines, who was now pressingly demanding the payment of his claim for 1,000 florins. This danger was painfully appreciated by all men of culture. Who was then prayed to avert it? Who willingly came forward? No other than Savonarola, the notoriously barbaric destroyer of ancient manuscripts!

The convent of St. Mark was poor at this time, the friars having stripped themselves, by their superior's advice, of nearly all their possessions; nevertheless they contracted a loan, sold their remaining lands at Pian di Mugnone, and by the payment in October 1495, of 2,000 florins—an enormous sum for those d[illegible] ed the famous library in deposit for a year. [illegible] the contract, if the m[illegible] were not repai[illegible] of that period the fri[illegible] ld be authoriz[illegible] themselves by sell[illegible] of the colle[illegible]

this was their first step towards buying it outright, and meanwhile they set to work to recover all the scattered manuscripts, some of which had been lent or otherwise dispersed.[1] Savonarola considered that the credit of the convent and its remaining property could be devoted to no better use. By the purchase of this precious collection he saved it from dispersion and from the danger of falling into alien hands; and by placing it in the convent library—the only one then open to the public—he could not only render a service to Florence, but at the same time help to tide the State over its financial embarrassments. And when, as he had foreseen, the Government proved unable to restore the money at the end of the year, he began to negotiate for the purchase of the library by offering another thousand florins to Philippe de Commines, for the payment of which Bernardo Nasi became guarantee.[2] A contract to this effect was signed in January, 1498. This affair was accordingly going on during the years in which the Medicean carnival gaieties were suppressed and the first (1497) and second (1498) burning of the Vanities performed. Here, then, is historical proof that the supposed enemy of the ancients, the barbarous destroyer of manuscripts and works of art, not only devoted the last remnant of his convent's property, but likewise burdened the community with a very heavy debt, in order to preserve to art and science the marvellous collection of Greek and Latin codices and the

[1] *Vide* Professor Piccolomini's work, quoted elsewhere. At the end of the Inventory given in his book, there was a list of the Codices *recuperati per fratres.*

[2] *Vide* Ubaldini, "Cronica di San Marco," sheet 18: "Fratres etiam nostri, considerantes quod ordo prædicatorum decore fulgeret si remanerent in domibus nostris libri prædicti; videntes augustiam Dominorum, ui quærebant unde pecuniam comparare sibi pro publicis necessitatibus vitatis, et quomodo cogerentur illos tradere pro modica quantitate . . . n fratribus tunc pecuniæ deessent, decretum . . . est ut eas mutuarent ibros penes se retinerent."

unrivalled treasure of miniatures still contained in the Laurentian Library.[1]

But the strength of our Friar's interest in ancient

[1] The following notices may be added to what we have said elsewhere concerning the Library of St. Mark's. Niccolò Niccoli having bequeathed to the public his famous collection of about six hundred ancient codices, Cosimo de' Medici paid the debts by which it was burdened, and retaining two hundred volumes for his own use, consigned the rest to St. Mark's. He and Lorenzo afterwards enlarged their collection; and their efforts in this direction are so generally known that it would be idle to recapitulate them. The friars of St. Mark's were no less energetic; for, as may be seen by a public document, formerly preserved among the convent MSS. (now nearly all removed to the Laurentian Library), they paid, on the 10th of December, 1445, the sum of 250 florins for the purchase of MSS., and continued to make fresh acquisitions down to Savonarola's day, when they became possessed of the Medici Library in the manner described. All particulars of the sale of the Library are derived from the numerous documents in the Florence Archives. We also referred to the "Cronica di San Marco," and the depositions made at Savonarola's trial by the librarian, Frà Roberto degli Ubaldini da Gagliano, and added the latter to the other documents concerning the purchase of MSS. *Vide* Appendix to the Italian edition, doc. xxxiv.

In 1872 Dr. N. Anziani, then vice-librarian of the Laurentian Library, published a work entitled "Della Biblioteca Mediceo-Laurenziana," Florence: Tofani, 1872, containing many useful particulars. Finally Professor Piccolomini produced a work, first appearing in the "Archivio Storico Italiano," S. T., 1874–75, and then in a separate form, that may be said to be exhaustive, and is entitled "Intorno alle condizioni ed alle vicende della libreria Medicea privata." Florence: Cellini, 1875. This work comprised all the documents given in our Appendix (to the Italian edition), together with others we had left aside, and with the addition of many discovered by himself, some of which are of so valuable a nature that it would be difficult to add any fresh information.

It may not be superfluous to remind the reader that after Savonarola's death one of the numerous acts of persecution directed against the convent consisted in depriving it under false pretences of all the books belonging to the Medici collection. In October, 1500, they were restored under fresh conditions, and at last, in 1508, the community being burdened with debts, and Savonarola, the careful preserver of the books, being no longer alive, the collection was sold to Galeotto Franciosi, the agent of Cardinal Giovanni de' Medici, afterwards Leo X. Thus it went to Rome, and again returned thence to Florence. Bandini, "Lettera sopra i collettori di codici orientali, esistenti nella insigne Basilica Laurenziana; Annales conventus S. Marci" (frequently quoted by us under the title of "Cronica di San Marco," and also under that of Ubaldini), at sheets 18, 22, 23, 26, 28; Padre Marchese, "Storia del convento di San Marco," p. 46 and fol.; Piccolomini, op. cit.

MICHELANGIOLO BUONAROTTI.

manuscripts in no way lessened his admiration for the fine arts. Did he not found the school of design in St. Mark's, and insist that his novices should practise the arts in order to provide for the necessities of the convent without having recourse to charity? Was he not continually surrounded by a chosen band of the best artists of his age? All the world knows the ardent affection he had inspired in Frà Bartolommeo della Porta, who, for four years after his master's death, was unable to resume the brush.[1] All the Della Robbia were devoted to Savonarola, two of them received the monastic robe from his hands, and the family long preserved a traditional reverence for his name. Concerning Lorenzo di Credi, Vasari tells us that "he was a partisan of Frà Girolamo's sect," and relates of Cronaca, "that he had conceived so great a frenzy for Savonarola's teachings, that he could talk of nothing else;" and he says the same of Sandro Botticelli, whom he numbers among those who illustrated the Friar's works with beautiful engravings. But it is enough to mention the name of Michelangiolo Buonarotti, known to be one of his most constant hearers, and who, in his old age, constantly read and re-read the Friar's sermons, and never forgot the potent charm of that orator's gestures and voice.[2] When labouring on the ramparts of San Miniato al Monte in defence of the resuscitated Republic in 1529–30, the sculptor proved how well he had profited by the master's teachings.

In fact, the manifest injustice of the charges of hostility to the fine arts alleged against Savonarola, moved an

[1] Vasari records that Frà Bartolommeo added several of his own sketches from the nude to the pile of the "Vanities." If this be true, the blame of the deed must fall on the painter; but we must not forget that Vasari lived a century after Savonarola, always wrote of him in a hostile spirit, and was not very favourable to the memory of Frà Bartolommeo.

[2] See, too, Harford's "Life of Michael Angelo Buonarotti," already quoted by us, and in which special attention is given to the relations between Buonarotti and Savonarola.

eloquent French writer to assume his defence. But unfortunately he, too, was led by an excessive admiration for his hero, undue love of system and religious zeal, to exceed the bounds of truth and thus neutralize the effect of his earnest vindication. He persisted in regarding Savonarola almost as a leader of Italian painting, a reviver of that which he styled *Christian art*, as distinguished from pagan or *naturalistic art*.[1] In this way he transformed all the artists who had been admirers of the Friar

[1] Rio, Art Chrétien. The latter school, according to Rio, is merely a degraded form of the only true art: the Christian art. Taking it for granted that in the fifteenth century both schools were equally flourishing, he attributed the progress of *naturalism* to the Medici through their encouragement of classical and pagan ideas; and to Savonarola the revival of Christian art. But although he is quite right in thinking that Savonarola promoted Christian ideas in opposition to the Medici, by whom classical learning was used as an instrument of intellectual advance and moral corruption, it is equally certain that Rio's theories cannot withstand the test of facts. On turning to the painters who flocked round Savonarola, we shall find that none of them was an exclusive follower of Mons. Rio's so-called Christian art. Frà Bartolommeo was the foremost of these painters. Yet, was he not one of the first, if not the first of all, to lead painting into a decidedly classical groove, and to inaugurate the Cinquecento school of art? And did not Michelangiolo Buonarotti push this school to its farthest extreme? It is true that we find the Della Robbia among Savonarola's admirers; but Luca della Robbia, the immortal sculptor of so many Virgin Mothers, was already dead, and had lived with Frà Beato Angelico, in the days of Cosimo de' Medici. Another follower of Savonarola, Cronaca, was one of the first to start the school of classic architecture, and of this we have a good proof in the Hall of the Conciglio Maggiore. Lorenzo di Credi is known to all as the disciple and even imitator of Leonardo da Vinci; while as to Sandro Botticelli, Mons. Rio tells us that he was "infected with the pagan spirit." What, therefore, becomes of the school of Christian art, founded by Savonarola, when all his followers are seen to have taken the opposite path in art, designated by Mons. Rio as the naturalistic school, and when it is proved beyond doubt that the writer's so-called Christian art was far more flourishing in the time of Cosimo de' Medici?

Nevertheless, it should not be forgotten that Mons. Rio was one of the first to appreciate the moral contrast between Savonarola and the Medici, and to give a vivid and even eloquent account of it. His blunders, though neither few nor slight, proceed from his superficial knowledge of history, and his resolve to attribute every progress in art to exclusively religious causes. Thus his work has a polemical rather than an historical character.

into so many disciples of a supposed school, that, even had he possessed the necessary aptitude, Savonarola could neither have had the opportunity nor the leisure to establish, seeing that, as he himself so often declared, the absorbing agitations of his political and religious life compelled him to neglect all other studies and occupations.

In point of fact the Christian ideal of art, as conceived by Beato Angelico and his contemporaries, was in its decline in Savonarola's day. The artist-friends who best loved him studied from nature and the antique, tended towards classicism, and were in danger of losing sight of the sacred ideal so fervently urged by their master as essential to the new art. And the need of this ideal being more widely recognized than is generally thought, by the Italian scholars and artists of the period, they were all fired with enthusiasm for the preacher who taught them that the Renaissance neither might nor could suppress Christianity. Thus, while regarded by sceptics and pedants as one bent on reviving the past, Savonarola was held by great souls of Michelangiolo's stamp to be, as he truly was, the precursor of a new era, in which the power of Christianity would again be revived, without prejudice to nature or antiquity.

But at this point the nature of our subject leads us to an inquiry into Savonarola's ideas on the beautiful, which indeed constituted neither a small nor insignificant part of his doctrines. The Friar's mind ranged over a vast domain of thought; his philosophy embraced the entire *scibile*, and everything on which he turned his glance inspired him with new and original conceptions. We will first give a few ideas culled from his sermons. "In what does beauty consist? In colour? No. In form? No! Beauty is born of the correspondence of parts and colours;. . . . this as regards composite things: the

beauty of simple things is in their light. Behold the sun and the stars, their beauty is in the light they shed; behold the spirits of the blessed, their beauty consists of light; behold, God is light! He is beauty itself! . . .[1] Thus the beauty of man and woman is the greater and more perfect the more resemblance it hath to primary beauty. What, then, is this beauty? It is a quality resulting from the proportion and correspondence of the members and parts of the body. Thou dost not call a woman beautiful on account of her beautiful nose and beautiful hands, but when all is in harmony. What is the source of this beauty? On investigation thou wilt see that it emanates from the soul.[2] . . . Now take two women of equal beauty; let one be good, modest, and pure; the other a prostitute: thou wilt see the good one shine with an almost angelic beauty, and that the other, however handsome she may be, is in no way comparable with the good and virtuous woman.[3] . . . Thou wilt see that this holy one will be dearer to every one, and that all eyes, even those of carnal-minded men, will be attracted to her."[4]

"And the reason of this is because the untainted soul shares the beauty of God, and lends its Divine charm to the body. We read concerning the Virgin, that her great beauty struck all who looked on her with amazement, but that she was so encircled by a halo of sanctity, as to excite impure desire in no man, all, on the contrary, holding her in reverence." This gave Savonarola an opportunity to address his female hearers, and censure their attention to outward and material beauty while neglecting the spiritual beauty that alone had any value

[1] "Prediche sopra Amos e Zaccaria." Sermon of Friday after the third Sunday in Lent.

[2] Sermon xxviii., on Ezekiel.

[3] Sermon iii., on Haggai.

[4] "Prediche sopra Amos e Zaccaria." Sermon of Friday after the third Sunday in Lent.

in his eyes. "Ye women that glory in your finery, in your hair and your hands, I tell ye that ye are all hideous! Would ye behold true beauty? . . . Note some devout person, either male or female, that hath the Divine spirit; note him, I say, when engaged in prayer, and in the flush of Divine beauty and on his return from prayer; then will ye see the beauty of God reflected in his face, and his countenance almost as that of an angel."[1] He then turned to the artists, who in painting the Virgin and the saints not only delighted in representing varied fashions of attire, but instead of seeking to express the nobility and holiness of some elevated and sublime type, frequently gave portraits of persons notorious for their evil life and indecent and scandalous habits. "And these young men go about saying of this woman and that—Here is a Magdalen, here a Virgin, there a St. John; and then ye paint their faces in the churches, the which is a great profanation of Divine things. Ye painters do very ill; and did ye know, as I know, the scandal ye cause, ye would certainly act differently. . . . Ye fill the churches with vain things; think ye that the Virgin should be painted, as ye paint her? I tell ye that she went clothed as a beggar."[2]

These ideas, which are frequently met with in Savonarola's sermons, form an integral part of his system. His great aim was to ensure the triumph of Christianity and religion; and therefore, in art and morals, in politics and everything else, he steadily kept this purpose in view. But for a deeper knowledge of his æsthetic principles, we must turn to a little work of his upon poetry. The idea of it was conceived in the following way. Carried away by the heat of his eloquence Savonarola often

[1] Sermon xxviii., on Ezekiel.

[2] "Prediche sopra Amos e Zaccaria." *Vide* that of Saturday following the second Sunday in Lent.

indulged in severe and perhaps excessive condemnation of licentious poets and the use made of their works by contemporary preachers, who filled their sermons with quotations from writers of this kind, and especially from those of the heathen world. This gave rise to many murmurs, and although his own poems were well known to all, his adversaries proclaimed him hostile to poets and poetry in general. Thereupon the famous scholar, Ugolino Verino, then a great admirer of Savonarola (although afterwards his betrayer), sent him a Latin epistle, accompanied by some verses in praise of religion. He spoke of poetry in his letter, declaring that he agreed with Savonarola as to the benefit to be derived from true poets, and the evil caused by obscene writers and undue admiration of Paganism.[1] He seemed to wish to lead the Friar to a clearer explanation of his own ideas, and thus refute the calumnies of his opponents. And it was then that Savonarola published his little work on the "Division and Utility of all the Sciences," one portion

[1] Verino is known as the author of a poem in three books: "De Illustratione Urbis Florentine." His Latin letter and verses mentioned above, have been published in Gherardi's "Nuovi Documenti," p. 184 and fol. After citing various instances and authorities in favour of true poetry, Verino adds: "Ut ad Poeticem redeam, non opinor te a nostra sententia discrepare: egregios poetas gravibus plurimum prodesse sententiis, et elegantia et structura verborum valde delectare lectores; malos vero ac lascivos ut pestem esse vitandos, quod male abutantur tam clara dicendi facultate. . . . O impudentiam singularem, Iovem quam Christum, thyrsum quam Crucem, Iunonem et Bacchum quam Mariam et Johannem malunt nominare. . . . Da veniam temeritati: haec non ideo scripsi, ut Poeticæ exhibeam patrocinium, sed illos pariter increparem qui ea male abutuntur, et tuæ detrahunt sanctitati: posse etiam salva stili dignitate, deserte et ornate poema confingi de christiana felicitate. Vale." This letter clearly proves the nature of Savonarola's real opinions on the subject. Signor Gherardi believes it to have been written in 1491, since the author mentions having witnessed three years before the performance in Florence of the Menechmi of Plautus, and one of these performances is known to have been given in 1488. It is impossible to discover the exact date of the work Savonarola wrote in reply; but we believe it was written before the year 1494.

of which is entitled: "In Apology of the Art of Poetry." [1] The aim of the author was to prove that he despised no element of human knowledge, but sought to give each its due rank. But having spoken elsewhere of the division of the sciences adopted by the Friar,[2] we need only here explain the portion of the work devoted to poetry, in order to settle the point in discussion by means of the author's own words.

Accordingly Savonarola begins with a letter to Verino, in which he says: "I have never been minded to condemn the art of verse, but only the abuse made of it by many,[3] although not a few have sought to calumniate me in their speech and their writings. For, in truth, it was my purpose to pay no heed to these things, in pursuance of the precept: never to answer a fool according to his folly; but now thy words force me to take up the pen. But thou must not expect me to write elegantly, since for the last twenty years I have neglected all the humanities for other and graver pursuits." After this short preamble, he enters into the main question, by first drawing a distinction between the form and substance of poetry. "By some it is held to consist solely of form; but in this they are greatly deceived: the essence of poetry consists in philosophy and thought, since without these no man can be a true poet. And should any one believe that the art of poetry only teaches dactyles and spondees, long or short syllables, and verbal flourishes, he is undoubtedly in great error." [4] He then

[1] "Opus perutile de divisione ac utilitate omnium scientiarum: in poeticea apologeticus." Venetiis, 1542. There is also a fifteenth-century edition without indication of time and place.

[2] *Vide* bk. i. chap. vi.

[3] "Nec ego aliquando artem poeticam damnandam putavi sed quorumdam abusum" ("Epistola ad Verinum," at the beginning of the treatise: "Apologeticus de ratione poeticæ artis," p. 4. Venetiis, 1542).

[4] "Si quis credit artem poeticam solum docere dactylos et spondæos, syllabas longas, et breves, ornatumque verborum, magno profecto errore tenetur" ("Apologeticus," &c., p. 39).

proceeds to give a definition of poetry on thoroughly scholastic principles, but quickly changing his tone, enounces more original ideas: "The purpose of poetry," he says, "is to persuade by means of the syllogism called an example, expressed in elegant language, in order to convince and delight at the same time. And inasmuch as our soul finds sovereign pleasure in songs and harmonies, so the ancients contrived the art of metrical arrangement, the better by this means to urge men to virtue. But this metre is purely conventional, and the poet can deal with his theme without the aid of metre or rhyme.[1] This is proved by the Holy Scriptures, to which the Lord hath given the true poetry of wisdom, the genuine eloquence of the spirit of truth; thus instead of feeding men's minds with the husk of words, they instantly imbue them with the spirit, show them the essence of truth, and give marvellous nourishment to all that are free from earthly vanities. For verily what serveth an eloquence that never achieveth its proposed end? What serveth a painted and decorated bark, that is always struggling with the waves, never bearing its passengers nearer the port, but always moving farther away from it? What profiteth it to the soul, merely to tickle the ears of the multitude, praise oneself as a divinity, mouth lauds of the philosophers, and sing poets' verses out of tune, while forsaking or barely remembering the gospel of Jesus Christ!"[2]

After speaking in this way of poetry in general, he next treats of the poets of his own day. "There is," he says, "a false race of pretended poets, who can do nought but run after the Greeks and Romans, repeating their ideas, copying their style and their metre, and even

[1] "Potest enim poeta uti argumento suo, et per decentes similitudines discurrere sine versu" ("Apologeticus," &c., p. 38).

[2] Ibid. pp. 45–48.

invoking the same deities, almost as though we were not men as much as they, with reason and religion of our own.[1] Now this is not only false poetry, but likewise a most hurtful snare to our youth. Were this not already as clear as sunlight, I would labour to prove it: experience, the only teacher of all things, having so plainly manifested to all eyes the evils born of this false kind of poetry, that it is needless to pause to condemn it.[2] And what shall we say, on finding that even the Pagans condemned poets such as these? Did not Plato himself, whom nowadays all extol to the skies, declare the necessity of making a law for the expulsion from the city of all poets, who by the example and authority of most iniquitous deities, and the allurements of most shameful verse, filled the world with ignominious lust and moral destruction? Why do our Christian rulers make no sign? Why do they dissemble these ills? Why do they not pass a law banishing from the city not these false poets only, but even their works, and those of the ancient writers treating of vicious subjects, and in praise of false gods? It would be an excellent thing were such books destroyed, and only those inciting to virtue preserved." [3]

These were the utterances, some of which are certainly unduly severe, serving as the basis of many of the charges alleged against Savonarola. We have given them in full, the better and more clearly to show how, after all that had passed, even after the proofs he had given of his regard for the treasures of ancient and modern art, what

[1] Having given this passage word for word in an earlier chapter, we only give a summary of it here.

[2] "Modus autem artis, quem nunc nostri poetæ servant, . . . hoc est metrorum ac fabularum, laudumque Deorum, adolescentibus pestis est perniciosissima. Et certe ad hoc probandum laborarem, nisi sole clarius appareret. *Experientia ipsa, rerum magistra*, ita nostris oculis mala quæ ex perverso usu poeticæ artis eveniunt manifestat, ut non oporteat in probatione sudare" ("Apologeticus," &c., p. 53).

[3] "Apologeticus," &c., p. 54.

a handle these expressions gave to his enemies, and how he was betrayed into them by his indignation against those who profaned the beautiful, while feigning to be its ministers. The intemperance of his language was justified at the moment by the corruption of a time, in which the true, vigorous, and noble poetry of Dante Alighieri was neglected in the general craving for and delight in obscenities. "Nevertheless," continued Savonarola, "even among the ancients, there be some that condemned vicious things, and extolled the generous deeds of great men; by these, poetry was turned to good use, and I have neither the right nor the wish to condemn them." [1] But then he adds with fresh excitement, "even the best of these heathen poets should only be studied after a strong and healthy Christian training. Let them accordingly be kept from the eyes of the young until the latter have been first nourished on evangelical doctrines, and had them firmly impressed on their tender minds. It is a matter of no slight importance to give a good direction to their first training; but rather of great, and the greatest importance, since the beginning is more than half of the work. For my part, I hold it better to see Christians adorned with good morals but scanty eloquence, rather than see them rendered unworthy of the name of Christ by the brilliancy of their eloquence." [2]

In conclusion, he speaks of the benefit that poetry may confer on religion, and says: Were a poet only to sing the praises of religion, he might certainly do it honour, but would be of no real service to it. Unless vivified by

[1] "Verum quidam, non amatoria, non laudes idolorum, non turpia, sed virorum fortium gesta atque moralia versibus descripserunt, et bene usi sunt arte poetica et modo eius: hos igitur damnare nec possum nec debeo" ("Apologeticus," &c., p. 55).

[2] "Ego melius puto Christianos, moribus ornatos, minore fulgere eloquentia, quam propter eloquentiam Christi nomen perdere" ("Apologeticus," &c., p. 55).

the spirit, the letter kills; the honour and glory sought by the poet always consist in the art he employs, rather than in the subject treated by him. How, then, can he serve religion, before which all other human interests are as nought? The example of a poor, simple, ignorant woman kneeling in earnest prayer doeth more good to mankind than all the poets and philosophers who celebrate the Lord's praise with pompous declamation; for whereas the woman's heart is warmed by faith, these men's minds are full of worldly vanity." [1]

Undoubtedly, this will be regarded by many as too exclusive a mode of investigating the subject; nevertheless it appertains to a sounder method of criticism than might be supposed at first sight. Art, it is true, lives in a world of its own, in which it finds its own end, and is sufficient to itself. Those who, in seeking to elevate it, have tried to use it as an instrument for some moral, political, or religious end, have always reduced it to the level of prose. No picture, poem, or musical work has ever become immortal through being composed for a purpose, no matter how noble or generous that purpose may have been, whereas numerous works, conceived for no very laudable aim, have lasted through many centuries. Hence Savonarola showed no inadequacy in his conception of art, when distinguishing it so clearly from morality and religion; but, on the contrary, proved that he had grasped its true nature. Where he erred, was in allowing too little for the ennobling effect of mental culture on the soul, and the refinement of mind acquired in the realms of art. Being at that time solely dominated by religious ideas, he was over jealous in his attacks on the philosophical studies in which he was himself so well versed, and on the poetical art once so dear to him. But in deploring his

[1] This idea is not only enounced in the above-mentioned work, but continually reiterated in the sermons.

intemperance on this point, we must not forget that there were many celebrated scholars and philosophers in those days, who seriously looked forward to the revival of Paganism, and others who believed themselves to have attained the summit of art by the shameless indecencies they had strung together in Virgilian verse or Ciceronian prose. On the other hand, it was a great mistake to believe Savonarola insensible to the sublime symphonies of true art, or to the secret harmony of the beautiful. Was it not philosophy that had given him strength and courage to bear the cruel trials of his youth? Had not music and poetry served as a solace and vent to his earliest griefs? His verses prove him to have been no unworthy disciple of the arts which he was now held to despise. For, although his compositions may not always rise to the rank of true poetry, they all show a special originality and elevation of thought, and are therefore valuable proofs of the nobility of their author's mind. Some space must accordingly be given to their examination.

Although exclusively on religious themes, these verses are to be divided into two distinct classes, and they strangely confirm Savonarola's declared views on the nature of poetry and its various forms. Most of the *Canzoni* were written in his youth, before he had fled from the world, while he was still ardently devoted to letters, and only wrote to give vent to his innermost feelings. But his more numerous *Laudi Spirituali* were composed at a riper age, with the exclusively religious purpose of overthrowing the *Canti Carnascialeschi* which were then so popular in Florence. These Lauds are altogether outside the field of genuine art; for their metre, form, and even almost their ideas are suggested and determined by the very species of poetry they were meant to supersede. The author set them to the same music as the

Carnival Songs, and followed the same arrangement, while trying to substitute a word of faith or religion for every one of their lewd expressions. Hence, having voluntarily stretched himself on this bed of Procustes, he is forced by his very antagonism to imitate lines which are often poor in idea and full of artificial conceits, and is driven to unworthy verbal devices and subterfuges. Accordingly we cannot be surprised at the absence of true poetry in these Lauds, but rather that they should often show a certain amount of temperance, decorum, and good sense. When Girolamo Benivieni, a famous poet in his own day, attempted the same style, he frequently passed the limits, not only of art, but of common sense; and in singing the joy and delight of growing mad for love of Christ,[1] ventured to apply the name of poetry to the following lines :—

> To' tre once almen di speme,
> Tre di fede e sei d'amore,
> Due di pianto, e poni insieme
> Tutto al foco del timore :
> Fa' dipoi bollir tre ore ;
> Premi in fine, e aggiungi tanto
> D'umiltate e dolor, quanto
> Basta a far questa pazzia.[2]

Compared with effusions such as these, Savonarola's Lauds seem resplendently good, for at least they are more simply conceived, have more spontaneity of feeling, and a more practical, moral, and loftier aim. We subjoin the

[1] *Vide* "Poesie" by Girolamo Benivieni. Florence, 1500.

> Ognun gridi, com' io grido :
> Sempre pazzo, pazzo, pazzo.

("Let all cry, as I cry; mad, mad, for ever mad.")

[2] "Poesie" of Girolamo Benivieni :—"Take of hope at least three ounces, three of faith, and six of love, then two of hope, and set all to boil on the fire of fear: Let them boil three hours, and lastly squeeze and add enough humility and grief to create this madness."

first verses of one composed in the same year in which the new government was formed

Viva, viva in nostro core
Cristo re, duce e signore.

Ciascun purghi l'intelletto,
La memoria e volontade,
Del terrestre e vano affetto ;
Arda tutto in caritade,
Contemplando la bontade
Di Iesù re di Fiorenza ;
Con digiuni e penitenza
Si riformi dentro e fore.

Se volete, Iesù regni,
Per sua grazia in vostro core,
Tutti gli odii e pravi sdegni
Commutate in dolce amore ;
Discacciando ogni rancore,
Ciascun prenda in sè la pace :
Questo è quel che a Iesù piace,
Su nel cielo e qui nel core.[1]

Of the many Lauds composed by Savonarola, some have remained unpublished to the present day ; but these latter add nothing to his reputation as a poet, since besides having all the defects common to the rest, they were never revised by their author, and have been pre-

[1] This Laud is the fifth in the collection of Savonarola's poems published by Audin, and is entitled "Canzona ai Fiorentini." Literally translated, it runs thus : "Live, O live in our heart, Christ our king and chief and lord. Let each one purge his mind and memory and will of earthly and vain affections ; let him burn with charity, in contemplating the loving-kindness of Jesus, king of Florence ; Let each one purify himself within and without by fasting and penitence. If ye would have Jesus reign by His grace in your hearts, change all your hate and evil wrath into tender love ; casting forth all rancour, let each dwell in peace. This is that which is pleasing to Jesus, in heaven above and here in our hearts."

served in their original rough, fragmentary, and extremely incorrect form.[1]

But whenever Savonarola shakes off the fetters and bonds imposed by the theme of the Lauds; whenever his verses are no longer made to serve an aim with which poetry has no concern, and whenever his words flow freely and spontaneously from his heart, then he, too, has the right to say: I also am a poet. We find many proofs of this in the Canzoni, which, as we have said, were nearly all written in early youth, while he was still wrestling with earthly passions, and as yet unabsorbed in the spiritual delights, which inspired him with so excessive a contempt for the world. In the two Canzoni, "De ruina Ecclesiæ" and "De ruina Mundi," we already find much rough vigour and an energetic, though careless style of versification. In others, on the contrary, we meet with great delicacy of feeling, expressed with a certain amount of elegance, as may be seen by certain portions of the Canzone, beginning thus:

Quando il soave e mio fido conforto,
Per la pietà della mia stanca vita,
Con la sua dolce citara fornita
Mi trae da l'onde al suo beato porto,
Io sento al core un ragionare accorto.[2]

The same may be said of the Canzone addressed to

[1] Some of these Lauds were published for the first time in the first edition of these works. We derived them from the original manuscript possessed by Count Giberto Borromeo of Genoa, and explained that they were rough, unrevised drafts. They are reprinted in the Appendix to the present (Italian) edition (doc. xxxv.), but we must remind the reader that they were republished, together with the rest of the Lauds, in 1862, by Commendatore C. Guasti and Count C. Capponi. "Poesie di Frà Girolamo Savonarola tratte dall' autografo." Florence: Cecchi, 1862.

[2] "When my gentle and faithful comforter, in pity of my weary life, furnished with his sweet citara (lute), draws me from the flood of his blessed port, I feel a subtle reasoning in my heart."

Mary Magdalen,[1] in which he describes with much feeling how the saint was borne to heaven by Jesus Christ :

E tutto il suo cor arde
E nell' amor di Dio non si raffrena.[2]

But to give a good idea of these compositions, we subjoin in full a Canzone written in praise of Caterina de' Vegri, who was born in 1463, and afterwards canonized as a saint by the Roman Curia in 1724.

I.

Anima bella, che le membra sante,
Salendo al ciel, abbandonasti in terra,
Per far fede fra noi dell' altra vita ;
Or ch' è fornita pur la lunga guerra,
Ove giammai non fusti isbigottita,
Ni mai voltasti al Sposo tuo le piante,
Sei gita a lui davante
Col cor pudico e con la mente pura,
Per trionfar della tua gran vittoria,
In sempiterna gloria,
Fuor di quest' aspra e cieca vita dura,
Là dove ormai con Cristo sei secura.

II.

Il sacro corpo ben dimostra quanto
Esaltata t'ha Iddio nell' alto cielo,
E la virtude che fra noi si vede,
Spirto gentil, esempio al mondo felo,
Fiamma celeste alle coscienze frede,
E degli afflitti, o refrigerio santo !
Chi con devoto pianto
A te s'inchina, Vergine beata,
Sciolto riman da mille pensier frali ;
Perchè quanto tu vali
Dinanzi a Cristo, o sposa coronata,
Il ciel il vede, e 'l mondo ove sei nata.

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[1] This is No. xiii. of Audin's collection ; No. xii. is also addressed to the same saint, but is a very inferior work.

[2] "And all her heart is on fire, and she freely pours out her love of God."

III.

Da mille parti, sol per fama core
Diverse genti a rimirar le membra,
Che, essendo spente, par che viva ancora,
E del suo spirto par che si rimembra.[1]
Ogn' uomo il vede, quivi ogn' uom l'adora,
E pien di maraviglia gli fa onore.
Deh! qual selvaggio core
Non lacrimasse fort di dolcezza,
Vedendo l'opre sante e l'umil viso?
Se adunque è un paradiso
Il corpo al mondo, e tanto qui si prezza,
Che fia a veder di spirto la bellezza?
O felice alma, che giammai non torse
Il santo piè dal dritto suo cammino,
Sempre sprezzando quel che 'l mondo brama![2]

Unless we are mistaken this Canzone shows an exquisite refinement and delicacy of feeling. But in general, it must be confessed, that were we to regard the Friar's

[1] It would be an arduous task to correct the grammatical errors of this strophe, although it is not without merit.

[2] Fair soul, whose holy limbs have soared to heaven and fled the earth, to teach us faith in the future life; now the long combat is done, in which thy courage never failed, nor didst thou ever turn thy back on thy Bridegroom, thou art now gone to His presence, to rejoice with modest heart and pure mind in the triumph of thy victory, in everlasting glory; removed from this blind, harsh, and unkind world, and art now safe with the Lord on high. Thy holy body well showeth how the Lord had chosen thee for His own, and the virtue thou didst manifest here below. O gentle spirit, wast an example to the wicked world, a celestial fire to lukewarm hearts, and a holy refuge to the afflicted! He that bows before thee, O sainted virgin, with pious tears, is delivered from all frail thoughts; for heaven sees thee, and the world that gave thee birth, in thy true place, a crowned bride in the company of Christ Jesus. From a thousand parts, drawn by thy fame, the peoples flock to gaze on the form that, dead though it be, seems still to live and be renewed by the spirit within. All men see this, all men therefore adore it, and full of marvel come to do it homage. What heart, howsoever fierce, could fail to shed rivers of sweet tears on beholding thy holy works and humble countenance? If, therefore, even thy body seemeth a paradise in this world, and is so valued here, what were it not to see the beauty of thy spirit? Thou happy soul, that never turned thy holy steps from the true path, but ever despised all that is cherished of the world!" This Canzone, No. iii. of the Audin edition, seems to have been left unfinished.

poetical compositions solely from the artistic point of view, we should often be compelled to judge them most severely, since nearly all are very defective in style, and their motive seldom reaches the height of real poetic creation. Nevertheless we cannot read these works without an increased esteem for their author, since we are impressed by the true poetry of his nature even when he fails to express it in his verse; for in his case, this is an integral portion of the soul rather than a product of the mind. It is true that this poetic spirit is only seen in occasional flashes, but is all the more luminous owing to the author's apparent unconsciousness.

Some other Latin compositions of Savonarola's pen may also be classed as poetry, for although devoid of metrical form, they are modelled on the Psalms. One of these, celebrating the praises of the Lord, runs as follows: "I sought Thee everywhere, but found Thee not. I asked of the earth: Art thou my God? And the earth answered: Thales is deceived; I am not thy God. I questioned the air, and the air replied: Thou must go higher. I questioned the heavens, the stars, and the sun, and all made reply: He that created us from nothing He is thy God; He filleth heaven and earth, He dwelleth in thy heart. Thus, O Lord, I had sought Thee afar, and Thou wert near. I asked of my eyes whether Thou hadst entered in through them, but they answered that they only knew colours. I asked my ear, and it answered that it only knew sound. Wherefore the senses know Thee not, O Lord; Thou hast entered into my soul, Thou dwellest in my heart, and workest in me when I do deeds of charity."[1] Thus in all that Savonarola wrote we find a spiritual tendency; some noble and holy aspiration piercing the often rebellious husk of form to show us his moral greatness, and prove that, if seldom a poet, he was ever a fit theme for poetry of the highest kind.

[1] *Vide* "Alcuni devotissimi trattati," &c. Venice, 1537.

# BOOK IV.

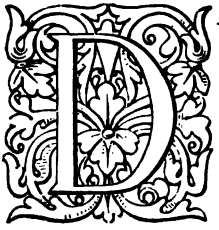
## *CHAPTERS I.—XI.*

(1497–1498.)

# CHAPTER I.

*SAVONAROLA'S SERMONS ON EZEKIEL DURING LENT, 1497. PIERO DE' MEDICI'S CAREER IN ROME. A FRESH ATTEMPT TO RE-ESTABLISH HIM IN FLORENCE; AND COMPLETE FAILURE OF THE SCHEME.*

(1497.)



URING Lent, 1497, Savonarola continued his course of sermons on Ezekiel, touching upon various important points connected with the struggle with Rome, now becoming daily more virulent. Consequently these discourses were very imperfectly reported by Violi, who only made short and arid summaries of them, and often omitted to record topics of real interest in favour of revelations and prophecies. We will therefore confine our attention to certain of the more noteworthy fragments.

One of the most remarkable points in these sermons is the question of the temporal possessions of the Church, upon which Savonarola had hitherto refrained from expressing his full views, probably in the hope that a better opportunity would be afforded him at the assembling of the Council. Nevertheless, in this Lenten course on Ezekiel, he plainly declared that the Church was entitled to temporal wealth, and that the possession of it had been sometimes necessary as well as useful, although now appa-

rently degenerated into a mischievous burden. "The Church," he exclaimed, "hath been ruined by wealth. Wouldst thou say then, O Friar, that the Church should have no temporal wealth? Nay, it were heresy to say this, for we cannot believe that St. Sylvester would have accepted riches for the Church, or St. Gregory confirmed her in possession of them, had it been unlawful so to do; and for this reason we submit ourselves to the Church of Rome. Oh, but which is best, that she have riches or have them not? This is a serious question, for we all see that for the sake of wealth she hath been led to do evil, and of this I need give ye no proof. We will therefore reply, but in no absolute sense, even as the mariner who doth not *absolutely* wish to cast his riches into the sea, but only seeketh to escape danger, and will say that the Church would be better without riches, since she could thus be drawn nearer to God. Wherefore I say to my friars, Seek to adhere to poverty, for when riches enter among ye, death too comes in."[1] Pursuing the same theme, he inveighed against all laymen and priests who usurped ecclesiastical property and made a bad use of it. "Whoever hath usurped any ecclesiastical property, let him restore it to the Church of Christ, if there be any good pastors; if not, let him give it to the poor without regard to the canonical law. Thou, O canonist! mayst say what thou wilt, but my chief canon shall ever be that of charity. I bid ye take this for your rule, that no canon can be opposed to charity and conscience, for, if so, it is a false canon."[2]

To Savonarola, indeed, charity was the universal law,

[1] "Prediche sopra Ezechiele," &c., already quoted. It should be noted that this volume includes both the Lenten and Advent series; the Advent course ends with viii., the Lenten begins with ix.

[2] Sermons xiii. and xiv. He alludes more particularly to the holders of family benefices, who made an unworthy use of them, either by selling them or causing men to enter the Church without any true vocation.

conscience the supreme guide. He desired to make no changes of dogma, but did not believe that a purely ecclesiastical reform could suffice to cure the universal corruption of the Christian world; it was necessary to revive men's faith and regenerate their hearts. "What is all this war stirred against me? What is its cause? Only because I have discovered the corruption of the wicked.[1] . . . But I will do, even as Frà Jacopone in Consistory, who on being bidden to preach in a certain way, looked round and repeated three times: I marvel that the earth doth not split and engulf ye on account of your sins."[2]

During this Lent, also, many sermons were filled with accusations against Rome, which were rendered the more impressive by the general presentiment of an approaching crisis in the prolonged struggle, and of the speedy revolt of all Christendom against the abominations of Rome. And Savonarola no longer hesitated to declare that he would take the lead in any movement for the purification and reform of the Church. "The earth teems with bloodshed," he said, "yet the priests take no heed, rather by their evil example they bring spiritual death upon all. They have withdrawn from God, and their piety consists in spending their nights with harlots, and all their days in chattering in choirs; and the altar is made a place of traffic for the clergy. They say that God hath no care of the world, that all cometh by chance, neither believe they that Christ is present in the sacrament.[3] . . . Come here, thou ribald Church. The Lord saith: I gave thee beautiful vestments, but thou hast made idols of them. Thou

[1] Sermon xix. [2] Sermon xvii.

[3] Sermon xxii., afterwards suppressed by the Congregation of the Index. One of the charges Savonarola frequently brought against the clergy was that they had no belief in Transubstantiation. This proves how far he was from sharing the Reformed doctrines of which some have declared him to be the initiator.

hast dedicated the sacred vessels to vainglory, the sacraments to simony; thou hast become a shameless harlot in thy lusts; thou art lower than a beast, thou art a monster of abomination. Once, thou felt shame for thy sins, but now thou art shameless. Once, anointed priests called their sons nephews; but now they speak no more of their nephews, but always and everywhere of their sons.[1] Everywhere hast thou made a public place and raised a house of ill-fame. And what doeth the harlot? She sitteth on the throne of Solomon, and soliciteth all the world: he that hath gold is made welcome and may do as he will; but he that seeketh to do good is driven forth. O Lord, my Lord, they will allow no good to be done! And thus, O prostitute Church, thou hast displayed thy foulness to the whole world, and stinkest unto Heaven. Thou hast multiplied thy fornications in Italy, in France, in Spain, and all other parts. Behold, I will put forth My hand, saith the Lord, I will smite thee, thou infamous wretch; my sword shall fall on thy children, on thy house of shame, on thy harlots, on thy palaces, and My justice shall be made known. Earth and heaven, the angels, the good and the wicked, all shall accuse thee, and no man shall be with thee; I will give thee into thy enemy's hand.[2] . . . O priests and friars, ye, whose evil example hath entombed this people in the sepulchre of ceremonial, I tell ye this sepulchre shall be burst asunder, for Christ will revive His Church in His spirit. Think ye that St. Francis, St. Dominic, and the other saints have forgotten their creed, and no longer intercede for it? We must all pray for its renovation. Write to France and to Germany; write everywhere to this effect: That Friar ye wot of bids ye all seek the Lord and implore His coming.

[1] Here, he plainly alludes to Alexander VI., who wrote and spoke of his "children" without the least shame.

[2] Sermon xxii., afterwards suppressed.

Haste ye at full speed, O ye messengers! Think ye that we alone are good? That there be no servants of God in other places? Jesus Christ hath many servants, and great numbers of them, concealed in Germany, France, and Spain, are now bewailing this evil. In all cities and strong places, in all manors and convents, there be some inspired with this fire of zeal. They send to whisper somewhat in my ear, and I reply: Remain concealed until ye hear the summons—*Lazare, veni foras!* I am here, because the Lord appointed me to this place, and I await His call, but then will I send forth a mighty cry that shall resound throughout Christendom, and make the corpse of the Church to tremble even as trembled the body of Lazarus at the voice of our Lord.

"Many of ye say that excommunications will be decreed; but I repeat to ye that more than excommunication is intended. For my part, I beseech Thee, O Lord, that it may come quickly. What, hast thou no fear? Not I, for they seek to excommunicate me, because I do no evil. Bear this excommunication aloft on a lance and open the gates to it. I will reply unto it, and if I do not amaze thee, then thou mayst say what thou wilt. I shall make so many faces turn pale, that they will seem to thee a multitude; and I will send forth a shout that will cause the world to tremble and shake. I know well that there be one in Rome that striveth against me without cease. But that man is not moved by religious zeal, but only hateth me because he is ever crawling after great lords and potentates.[1] Others say: The Friar hath yielded, he hath sent one of his friends to Rome. I can tell thee that folks there hold not these views; and that if I

This is an allusion to Frà Mariano da Genazzano, whose secret intrigues will soon come to light. But Savonarola was so reluctant to make personal attacks, that he afterwards asked the people's pardon for having, in this almost solitary instance, made too plain an allusion to a person, whom he had nevertheless left un-named.

wished to play the part of a flatterer, I should not now be in Florence, nor clad in a tattered robe, and would be able to escape my present danger.[1] But I seek none of these things, O Lord, I seek only Thy cross: let me be persecuted, I ask this grace of Thee. Let me not die in my bed, but let me give my blood for Thee, even as Thou gavest Thine for me.[2] . . . Meanwhile doubt not, my children, for the Lord will certainly lend us His aid."

Thus ended the course of Lenten sermons that had excited so much sensation as to attract many hearers from distant parts, and among others Ercole d'Este, son of the Duke of Ferrara, who came expressly to Florence in disguise.[3] Savonarola was now engaged in preparing both himself and the people for a decisive struggle, being resolved to defy excommunication, and placing his only hope in the Council, which he hoped to see speedily assembled. He was aware that his refusal to agree to the junction of the Tuscan and Roman Convents, a measure that even the Cardinal of Naples was now seeking to promote, had caused this prelate also to join the ranks of his enemies, and had irritated the Pope to the highest pitch. Hence, all hope of further truce was at an end. Alexander VI., nevertheless, instead of venting his rage, devised a final expedient of truly diabolical ingenuity. He caused the Florentines to be informed in strict confidence that in case of their joining the Holy League and separating from France, he was empowered to negotiate with them for the surrender of Pisa. The Ten instantly despatched

[1] This would seem to allude to the offer of the cardinal's hat.

[2] Sermon xxviii., another of those afterwards suppressed.

[3] On the 5th of March, 1497, the orator Somenzi wrote to Ludovico from Florence to the following effect: "Yesterday evening, Messer Hercule, son of the Lord Sigismund of Este, arrived here, and has come *solum* and in disguise with six horses. . . He informed me he had come to hear this Friar Hieronymo of Ferrara preach." This letter is not included in Prof. Del Lungo's published collection.

Ser Alessandro Bracci as special envoy to Rome, and he sent a report, in two letters dated the 14th and 15th of March, of his interview with the Pope. First of all, the Holy Father had emphatically deplored the craft of the French, saying, "May God pardon the author of that expedition, which has been the cause of all the woes of Italy, as your State, having been dismembered by the loss of Pisa, must be well aware. It would be worse still if the French came again. Wherefore we are using our best efforts, as our Lord God knows, to weld the whole of Italy into one body. To effect this we count chiefly on your sagacious wits. After great difficulty we have induced the League to bestow Pisa on you, but only on condition that you join with us, and act as good Italians, by leaving the French in France. And for this we must have stronger guarantees than mere words."

The Florentines, however, declined to fall into the trap. They knew that the Venetians were aiding Pisa, and that Ludovico was at odds both with them and the Pope. Bracci accordingly kept to generalities and only replied: that *ab antiquo* and always, the Florentines had been held to be not only good, but excellent Italians, and that their simple word was the best security that could possibly be found. Nor could their alliance with France, to whom they owed so many obligations, be held to imply that they wished to do injury to any of the Italian potentates. "But at this point he was interrupted by the Pope, who roughly exclaimed: 'Mr. Secretary, you are as fat as Ourself, but pardon me, you have come on a lean mission, and if you have nought else to say to me, you may go back at once to your post.' And after adding that the Florentines would be driven by force to that which they would not do of their own accord, and would repent when it was too late, he lost all self-control and cried:

'We well know that all this comes of your faith in the prophecies of that parable-monger of yours, and allowing him to lacerate us, insult us, threaten us, and trample upon us, who, *licet immeriti*, now occupy the Holy Chair of St. Peter.'" The envoy tried to explain that His Holiness had been misinformed, that Savonarola was full of goodness and modesty, thus "endeavouring," as he wrote, "to calm the rage with which I saw him so inflamed." But all was in vain, for "he continued to ride the high horse, declaring that the League would do this and say that."[1] Messer Riccardo Becchi, the orator in ordinary, repeated the same information, also adding "that the offer to surrender Pisa was futile and *quodammodo* hurtful, without the consent of the Venetians who were opposed to it. "The rage against Savonarola," he said, in conclusion, "is increasing on all sides in Rome, so that it is no more possible to say a word in his defence. And we must be on our guard against the intrigues of Piero de' Medici who will certainly try to profit by the present serious aspect of affairs, which is decidedly favourable to him."[2]

In fact, the Bigi faction in Florence was now showing an unusual activity that caused no little anxiety to the friends of the free government, who saw that, in the present state of things, any attempt on the part of the enemy might lead to the gravest danger. The scarcity, and consequently dearness, of food, was continually increasing, the demand for labour had diminished, and no day passed without the city being invaded by fresh bands of famine-stricken rustics, who went begging about the streets the very incarnations of misery. And in the midst of the famine many diseases had broken out, worst of all the plague, which now began to spread with alarming rapidity. The hospitals and all public buildings were full

[1] Gherardi, "Nuovi Documenti," pp. 79–84.
[2] Ibid. pp. 84–86.

of sick and starving people, and the Piagnoni generously threw open their private abodes to all. Notwithstanding this aid, Jacopo Nardi calculates that several thousand persons perished of hunger in those days, and tells us that he himself saw many dying of exhaustion by the roadside and on doorsteps.[1] This was undoubtedly a most opportune moment for Medicean plots, and, in fact, while the Piagnoni were devoting all their energies to the relief of the poor, the Bigi were secretly conspiring for Piero's return. One of the most active of their accomplices was the Friar, Mariano da Genazzano, whose hatred for Savonarola was still red-hot; and who, after continually inflaming the Pope's rage against him, now suddenly reappeared in Florence. But before narrating these party intrigues, and the means employed by Piero de' Medici to execute his purpose, it is necessary to give an account of the latter's proceedings and ideas at this period. Fortunately we have a very minute report of all these things, compiled by Lamberto dell' Antella,[2] who had taken an active share in all Piero's plots, and was well acquainted with the manners and customs of his confederates.

After the failure of his last year's attempt to enter Florence by force of arms, Piero had fled to Rome, a ruined, hopeless, and almost friendless man, and there led a most degraded and scandalous life. On rising for the day, shortly before dinner, his first thought was to send to the kitchen to see whether the chosen dishes suited his taste, and if not, he repaired to the San Severino Palace, where a sumptuous banquet was daily held, and where he accordingly passed the greater part of his time. The meal over, it was his habit, so Antella informs us, to remain closeted with some courtezan until supper-time, or

[1] Nardi, "Storia di Firenze," vol. i. p. 115.

[2] We shall have occasion to refer again to Lamberto and his narrative, which is given in the Appendix to the Italian edition, doc. l.

even later, and then to go forth with loose and feather-headed companions into the streets of Rome, and after passing most of the night in debauch, to return to his wife about daybreak. Thus, he consumed his time and strength in gluttony, gambling, lewdness, and every description of unnatural vice; but of all his passions pride and love of oppression were the two strongest. He considered that all about him were bound to yield him implicit obedience, and allow him to tyrannize over them in any way he pleased. He never felt the least gratitude or mercy for those who served him; no amount of fidelity nor devotion availed to save them from brutal and arbitrary treatment. By way of rewarding a certain Francesco del Nero, who had traversed all Italy, by his command, bringing him large sums of money and serving him with the utmost zeal, Piero took a sudden dislike to the man, and positively begged Lamberto dell' Antella to contrive his assassination. Among the oldest and most devoted servants of his house there were always some to whom he showed the greatest affection whenever he was in need of their services; but directly they ceased to be of use he treated them worse than dogs, and even despatched some of them by poison. Nor were his retainers the only victims of his brutality; for he vented it upon all. To his brother the Cardinal [1] he often behaved with such excessive insolence, even in public, that more than once they came almost to an open rupture. Nevertheless, whenever the Cardinal received any money, Piero exacted a share, and in two or three days had squandered or lost it all at play.

By this mode of life the two brothers were reduced to such extremities as to be driven to pledge their plate, jewels, and tapestries. Being loaded with debts, they borrowed money at 20 per cent.; and, to use an expression

[1] Giovanni de' Medici, afterwards Pope Leo X.

of the period, every florin they spent cost them eight lire.[1] Meanwhile Piero continually cherished the hope of being some day reinstated in Florence, and revelled in the anticipation of the bloody revenge he would then wreak on his foes. He kept a memorandum of the families he intended to crush; their houses were to be razed to the ground and their property confiscated. In fact, when the Emperor's arrival at Pisa had again revived the hopes of the Medici, Cardinal Giovanni was one day heard to declare at Bolsena, while discussing the chances of their being recalled to power, that the number of those sentenced to exile and confiscation in '34,[2] and put to death in '78,[3] would be a mere joke compared with what they meant to do this time, inasmuch as they would take measures to prevent all risk of again being driven away. To this effect it was Piero's intention to devote nearly the whole revenue of the State to the hire of two large mercenary armies, under the command of Orsini and Alviano, and thus be able to ensure his revenge by force of arms. He also made continued applications to the Italian potentates, praying them to come to the aid of his house, it being his ardent wish to return to Florence by means of foreign assistance, in order to owe no obligation to any of his fellow-citizens, and be able to reign independently of their favour and advice, from which he shrank with the utmost abhorrence. One day, in fact, while conversing privately with some friends, of his longed-for return to Florence, and when, as frequently happens in these cases, all spoke as though everything must come about as they wished, Messer Ludovico da San Miniato turned to him and said, "You will be able to

[1] The gold florin. The relative value of florins and lire was constantly changing, but just then a florin was worth between five and six lire.

[2] The year of Cosimo's reinstatement.

[3] After the conspiracy of the Pazzi.

form a grand State, and, by means of a good and wise council of twenty-five or thirty citizens, to constitute a *Practica* and govern your dominions as you choose." Whereupon Piero made a very unseemly gesture, and replied, "You ought to know by this time that I don't mean to ask any one's advice, and prefer rather to manage badly on my own account than well by others' help." [1] Such were the manners and designs of the man whom the Italian princes were seeking to re-establish in Florence, and to whom fortune now seemed disposed to give a helping hand.

In the course of the violent struggle now going on between the Arrabbiati and Piagnoni in Florence, the Bigi had gained fresh strength; and by remaining united and compact, and throwing their whole weight now on this side, now on that, often succeeded in getting their nominees elected by the council. Thus, when the new Signory for March and April was chosen, they procured the post of Gonfalonier for Bernardo del Nero, who, though undoubtedly possessed of much influence and sagacity, had always been a creature of the Medici, and desired either their restoration or the establishment of a restricted government in Florence.[2]

When his election was made known, the Bigi tried in vain to conceal their joy. An express messenger instantly set off at full speed for Rome to carry the news to Piero de' Medici. Thereupon the latter, awaking

[1] *Vide* in the Appendix (to the Italian edition) the report by Lamberto d'Antella, to which we have previously referred, and from which we have drawn this description of Piero's life and manners.

[2] So Guicciardini asserts in the "Storia Fiorentina," chap. xv. p. 153, but in his "Storia Italia," vol. ii. p. 105, he merely says that Del Nero was a Medicean; so, too, Nardi, vol. i. p. 118, and other writers. On the day of his election (February 26th), the orator Somenzi wrote to Ludovico as follows: "No Gonfalonier could be better suited to our friend's views; hence it is thought that all will go as we wish." *Vide* Appendix to the Italian edition, doc. ii.

from his lethargy, hastened to write to friends, relations, and allies to beg men and money. The Pope and Venetians were very favourable to his cause; but the Duke of Milan was cold by reason of his old rancour against him.[1] He had many warm friends among the Florentine youth, who continually sent him cheering letters and messages, promising that as soon as he appeared the whole city should rise in his favour. Accordingly, being thus spurred and encouraged, he succeeded in collecting 1,300 men under the command of Bartolommeo d'Alviano, at that time a young Italian captain of great promise. But when the fallen tyrant was ready to take the field, and the new Signory favourable to him already nearing the end of their term, Bernardo del Nero sent to advise him to suspend operations, considering that the enterprise would have little chance of success at the moment. But Piero was not disposed to wait, after the sacrifices made and hopes excited, and on receiving more letters of encouragement from other friends, decided, at all risks, to make the attempt.

About the 20th of April he began his march to Siena, and found Pandolfo Petrucci, who was almost supreme in that State, well disposed to assist him. Accordingly, after resting and re-organizing his men, he took the road towards Florence on the 27th of the month. His movements were so rapid that two hours before daybreak on the 28th he was already at the monastery of San Gaggio,[2] and expected that at sunrise the people would throw open the San Pier Gattolini Gate[3] and welcome him back to the city. During the night a violent storm of rain had

[1] "For the which cause Piero took courage and asked help from the League, but the Duke unexpectedly failed him" (Guicciardini, "Storia Fiorentina," chap. xvi.).

[2] Less than a mile from Florence.

[3] Now known as the Roman Gate.

compelled him to halt near Tavarnelle, at about sixteen miles from Florence, and while his horses and men were resting, he had had the sagacity to arrest or drive back all persons on their way to the city. But among these was a peasant, who, on finding himself suddenly ordered back by mounted troops at that point, divined that Piero de' Medici was concerned in the matter; and hurriedly making his way across country, reached the gate just as it was being opened, and gave warning to the guards. He was immediately taken to the Signory, and before he reached the Palace the whole town was ringing with the news. The excited populace flew to arms, and the Signory were immediately compelled to close the gates and mount the few pieces of cannon which were ready for use. Bernardo del Nero did his best to conceal his real sentiments by showing great zeal in preparing for the defence; but as many suspicions were already afloat about him, the citizens refused to hoist their banners to summon the mob, and only supplied weapons to well-known and trusted friends of freedom, who instantly proceeded to man the gates.[1]

Just when the general alarm and disorder were at their height, Messer Filippo Arrigucci, one of the Signory, and a great friend of Savonarola, sent Girolamo Benivieni to ask the latter what he thought would become of the city. Benivieni relates that directly the Friar saw him enter the cell, he exclaimed, without giving him time to speak: "*Modicæ fidei, quare dubitasti?*" "Go, tell the Signory that Piero de' Medici will ride up to the gates and ride off again without obtaining any success."[2]

In fact, day had scarcely dawned before Piero rode up to the gate; but, to his great amazement, it was still closed. And when he saw that the few culverins mounted

[1] For all these particulars, *vide* Nardi, Guicciardini, Cerretani, Parenti, and Pitti, whose accounts are almost identical.

[2] *Vide* Benivieni's previously quoted letter to Clement VII.

on it were about to open fire on him, he took refuge behind a wall, vainly expecting that the people would presently rise in his favour. He remained waiting the whole day; and although at the head of 1,300 well-equipped soldiers,[1] had not the courage to make any use of them, preferring to expose himself to the scoffs of the inhabitants of the suburb, who were watching him and mocking at his fears. Being finally persuaded that no one in the city would stir a finger in his cause, and alarmed by the idea that the Florentine troops before Pisa might cut off his retreat, he decided to withdraw, or rather to fly, inasmuch as, before dawn the following day, he was already across the Sienese border.

After this event he could no longer entertain any hope of returning to Florence. His fortunes were now irretrievably ruined; his attempt of the previous year had shown him how little reliance could be placed in the pledges and promises of the allies; and now, even with one of his own friends at the head of the government, he saw the falseness of the hopes held out to him by his adherents. Nevertheless Florence was far from tranquil, and much turmoil and disorder prevailed. The suspicion felt by many that even the members of the Signory had intrigued in favour of the Medici, fostered a state of general excitement and distrust, exasperated party hatred, and aroused new dissensions. Accordingly it was most sagaciously resolved to keep the affair quiet until sufficient proofs of guilt could be established to justify some sanguinary act of retribution. A new Signory was chosen on the very day of the attempt; the Council of Eight was charged to

[1] Nardi says they comprised 500 light horse and as many or more foot, "fine and well-disciplined troops." Guicciardini ("Storia d'Italia") numbers them at 600 horse and 400 foot; Parenti, at 120 men-at-arms, 300 horse, and 1,500 foot; Ammirato and Sismondi, at 800 horse and 3,000 foot. I have preferred to follow the particulars given by Antella, who was in the best position for knowing the truth.

watch Piero's movements; while Francesco Valori, who was one of the Eight, and Tommaso Tosinghi, of the Ten, were commissioned to discover what threads of the conspiracy had been woven within the city. So for a time the affair was hushed up, but with imminent danger of some violent political crisis.

# CHAPTER II.

*SAVONAROLA'S SERMON ON ASCENSION DAY, AND THE POPULAR RIOT. THE EXCOMMUNICATION LAUNCHED AGAINST HIM, AND HIS REPLY. THE RAGING OF THE PESTILENCE, AND ITS DECLINE.*

(1497.)

ON the failure of Piero de' Medici's attempt, the fortunes of the Bigi instantly began to decline, and their most bitter enemies, the Arrabbiati, gained ascendency. The new Signory was composed almost entirely of Arrabbiati, and one of their chiefs, Piero degli Alberti, was created Gonfalonier of Justice. No sooner was this party master of the field than it strained every nerve to obtain reinforcements and thin the ranks of its adversaries. But as the Bigi, being terribly weakened, tried to keep in the background, all hostilities were directed against Savonarola and the popular party. The Arrabbiati were therefore regarded with high favour by the Duke of Milan, and with still higher by the Pope, who now denied all complicity with Piero de' Medici,[1] and promised them his best aid and

[1] Borgia declared that the affair had taken place "without his consent or knowledge." *Vide* "Lettera a Lorenzo di Filippo Strozzi," written by a certain *Antonio servo tuo*, and dated 20th May, 1497. In the Magliabecchi Library, Codex ii., ii. 437, at sheet 111.

support in destroying the Friar. Upon this they set vigorously to work, and foremost of all were the Compagnacci, whose leader, the depraved Doffo Spini, was a youth of noted audacity. The band met together at nightly banquets, and amid the cheerful clinking of wine cups, laid fresh plots against Savonarola. But as he had now withdrawn to his cloister, and abstained from appearing in the pulpit, all they could do was to affix insulting placards on the convent walls, disturb the services and prayers in St. Mark's by riotous behaviour, insult his congregation, and await the first opportunity for more serious attacks.[1]

Their chance soon came. On the 3rd of May, 1497, the approach of summer heats and the continuance of the plague gave the Signory a pretext for prohibiting all sermons in the churches after the 5th of the month.[2] But on Ascension Day, the 4th, it was still lawful to preach, and Savonarola resolved to show himself in the pulpit. Both friends and foes were equally excited by the announcement. The Arrabbiati declared that the Friar would not be heard; the Piagnoni that he would. Not only were many wagers laid on the subject, but the one side prepared for defence, the other for attack. Upon this the Signory issued a decree, annulling the wagers and forbidding any attempt to prevent the Ascension sermon from being given.[3] But their commands had no effect. The Compagnacci were bent on either killing Savonarola outright that day or at least doing him some grievous bodily hurt. First of all, ten of the band arranged with a firework-maker, named Baia, to blow up the pulpit during the sermon. This idea, however, was soon put

[1] At sheet 53[t] of the before-mentioned Codex, Violi gives a minute account of Doffo Spini.

[2] *Vide* the Decree in the Appendix to the Italian edition, doc. iii.

[3] *Vide* Ibid.

aside, on account of the terrible havoc it would make among the assembled congregation, and the infinite hatred it would arouse against the authors of the deed. So they decided on another plan. After defiling the pulpit with unmentionable filth, they draped it with the skin of an ass three days dead, and then nailed iron spikes into the ledge on which the Friar was accustomed to strike his fist in the heat of his eloquence. All this was a base and futile mode of attack; but Spini and his band hoped that it might lead to a riot, and thus give them an opportunity of effecting their real purpose.[1]

Meanwhile a thousand rumours, true and false, were afloat in the city as to the Compagnacci's designs. Some said that the pulpit had been poisoned by an invisible powder; others declared that the Friar would be murdered in the church, in the midst of his sermon; some repeated one story, some another. A few of Savonarola's friends came to his cell to implore him not to risk his life by preaching on Ascension Day. But he replied with noble indignation: "No fear of man shall induce me to deprive the people of their sermon on the day appointed by the Lord to His disciples for going to spread His doctrine through the world." Accordingly the only thing to be done was to sharpen their weapons for his defence.

At early dawn the first Piagnoni who entered the church cleansed the pulpit of every scrap of filth, planed its surface, and restored everything to order. Savonarola issued from the convent a little before mid-day, and entered the church with an escort of some of his best-trusted friends. Behind the multitude of people squeezed into the nave, the Compagnacci were descried standing apart and quite undismayed. They were all richly dressed and perfumed, and their airs of defiance and insolent

[1] This is related by the old chroniclers and biographers. *Vide* Nardi; Parenti; "Vita Latina," at sheet 31[t]; Burlamacchi, p. 95; Violi, &c.

smiles formed a marked contrast with the sober simplicity and reverential demeanour of the Piagnoni.[1] At the fitting moment the Friar ascended the pulpit, and began his sermon with a discourse on the power of faith: "Faith is all-powerful," he said, "can overcome every obstacle, and lead us to contemn earthly things by assuring us of the heavenly life. The times predicted are now at hand; the hour of danger hath come; and now it shall be manifest who is truly with the Lord. The wicked thought to prevent this sermon to-day: but they should know that I have never shirked my duty through fear of man. No mortal upon earth, be he great or small, can boast of having hindered me from fulfilling my office. I am even ready to lay down my life for it. O Lord! deliver me from those foes who brand me as a seducer; deliver my soul, since for my body I fear not. I call the Lord, the Virgin, the angels, and the saints to witness that all things predicted by me are revelations from God, revelations granted me by Divine inspiration during the vigils endured for the sake of this people that now plotteth against me."

After a long and general introductory on faith, Savonarola made a special address to the faithful: "Ye lose heart too easily, and are sad when ye should rejoice; now your tribulations are at hand; ye will be warred against by excommunications, by the sword, and by martyrdom: the days of trial are come. God grant that I be the first to endure them; I have already announced that I shall have to support great ingratitude, and that the lukewarm will do unto me even as Joseph's brethren did unto him, when they sold him to the merchants of Egypt. They (the lukewarm) cry that I am no prophet; yet they do all things to fulfil my prophecies. I tell ye again that

[1] These particulars are minutely described by Violi, Burlamacchi, and other biographers.

Italy will be devastated by barbarian hordes; and when these shall make peace among themselves, destruction after destruction will befall this perverted land. But ye that are righteous offer your prayers, and the Lord shall give ye succour."

"Now as to the wicked." At this point loud murmurs were heard in the church. "Lord, be thou not angered with them; forgive them, convert them, for they know not what they do. Ye wicked ones, ye think to combat the Friar, and ye thereby make war on the Lord; for I fight ye not from hatred to yourselves, but for the love of God. Ye say that I sow discord; but the Lord Christ Himself came to bring strife among men. Why return ye not to virtue, for then peace shall be with ye?—O Friar, thou shouldst not have preached when forbidden by the Signory.—That is not true; nor may I refrain from preaching from fear or by the command of man. I shall keep silent only when my preaching may do hurt, or I may fear that scandal come of it."

At this moment, as though it were intended to take him at his word, a tremendous crash resounded through the church; the doors were burst open, the crowd took to flight; and the noise, confusion, and disorder seemed enough to shake down the building. The tumult had been raised by the Compagnacci. Francesco Cei, one of their number, had seized the alms box and hurled it on the pavement, thus giving the signal for the disturbance. Some yelled and beat on the benches, while others banged open the doors. The conspirators were afraid to ring the bells, as had been arranged; but the panic-stricken crowd sought to escape, and while some of the more faithful pressed round the pulpit to protect Savonarola, others had already hastened to the Via del Cocomero [1] to fetch the weapons stored in the houses of Piero Fran-

[1] Now Via Ricasoli.

cesco Tosinghi and Cambi the Rich.[1] These friends, about sixty in number, quickly reappeared in the church armed with lances and swords. At first sight of the flashing steel the alarm of the multitude was increased, by mistaking the armed men for Arrabbiati, and the confusion became so tremendous that no one could move either backwards or forwards. Thereupon Bartolommeo Giugni and Giuliano Mazzinghi, who, as members of the Eight, thought their official dignity would preserve them from attack, advanced towards the pulpit with the intention of despatching Savonarola. But they found him well guarded, and Giugni received a severe blow in the face from Corbizzo da Castrocaro—an unprecedented experience for one of the Eight.

Savonarola vainly strove to make himself heard in all this demoniacal uproar and confusion by crying out: "Ah! the wicked refuse to hear their fate. . . . Wait! have patience!" Then raising the crucifix on high, he exclaimed: "Trust in this and fear nothing." But finding that no one heeded his words, he knelt in prayer, and, as soon as the tumult was somewhat abated, left the pulpit surrounded by his friends, who welcomed him with loud shouts of joy; some brandishing their swords and spears, others the crosses they held in their hands, and with cries of "*Viva Cristo!*" all then escorted him to St. Mark's. There, in the convent garden, in the midst of his brethren, Savonarola pronounced the following words by way of concluding his interrupted discourse: "The longer the Lord stayeth His hand, the more heavily and severely will He smite each one according to his works. The wicked refuse to believe, refuse to hearken; but they will fall into the pit they have dug for others: they are undermining the foundations of a wall that will crush them as

[1] Surnamed the Rich to distinguish him from many others of the name of Cambi in Florence.

it breaks. Now I will sing praises unto the Lord and joyfully depart from this life."[1] His "Ascension Sermon," as it was called, was speedily diffused throughout Italy. Girolamo Cinozzi had the courage to make a report of it in the midst of the riot, and this he published together with a faithful account of the scene that had passed under his eyes, and the concluding words delivered by Savonarola at St. Mark's.[2] In Florence, Rome, and all over Italy the attempt in the Duomo was the sole talk of the day, and every one feared the worst consequences from the event.

Meanwhile Savonarola brought out a new epistle, dated 8th of May, addressed: "To all God's chosen and faithful Christians."[3] In this he said: "We have resolved to imitate the Lord, who on many occasions bent before the rage of the Scribes and Pharisees; and will therefore abstain from preaching. But in order that the Lord's work may not be overthrown, nor the wicked made to rejoice, we will express in writing that which we may not say by word of mouth. Be not troubled, but rather

[1] The narrative of this event is not only derived from the biographers ("Vita Latina," sheet 31 and fol.; Burlamacchi, p. 93 and fol.), and other historians from whom we have quoted, but also from G. Cinozzi's pamphlets, mentioned below, and private manuscript letters in the Magliabecchi Library. One of these is addressed by Alessandro Giugni to Lorenzo, son of Filippo Strozzi, and dated 4th of May, 1497 (Codex ii., ii. 437, at sheet 113); another, addressed to the same person on the same day, is from the pen of Jo. de Borromeis (same Codex at sheet 106). *Vide* Appendix to the Italian edition, doc. iv.

[2] This pamphlet, of which there are many contemporary editions, undated, supplies us with an authentic and detailed account of the events from the pen of an eyewitness. It is entitled: "Predica del venerando P. F. Hieronymo da Ferrara, facta la mattina dell' Ascensione, 1497." There is a "Prohemio" affixed to it, beginning thus: "Hieronymus Cinoctius Barnabe Rodiano suo salute." This Cinozzi must not be confounded with the other of the same name, author of the "Epistola," or Short Life of Savonarola, preserved in manuscript in the Riccardi Library, and to which we have had to make frequent reference.

[3] "A tutti gli eletti di Dio e fedeli Cristiani." It was repeatedly reprinted in 1498, and is also given in Quétif's work, vol. ii. p. 170.

rejoice in persecutions. All our prophecies are being fulfilled; first of all they (the wicked) have slandered us, then by crooked paths they have sought our excommunication, and having failed to achieve this as yet, now strike at our life. Hitherto no drop of blood hath been spilt, for the Lord, knowing our frailty, hath not permitted us to be tempted beyond our strength; but increasing our weight of tribulation step by step, will likewise raise our faith, virtue, and courage to a higher pitch. Thus He prepareth us for heavier persecutions, so that men being amazed by our constancy may begin to know that we are sustained by the certainty of a better life than this, and may begin to hope in it themselves. Our tribulations, despite the will of those that provoke them, will serve to diffuse this light. We give thanks to the Lord for having, in these utterly faithless times, chosen us to suffer for the faith. And as ye are deprived of the word of God by the sin of those who raised a scandal on the day appointed by the Lord to His disciples for going forth and preaching in the world, pray ye the Almighty that He once more deign to unseal the lips of His preachers, inasmuch as that which He ordaineth no strength may prevail against."

During this time the power of the Arrabbiati was daily increasing in Florence, and the Frateschi were more and more oppressed. The authors of the riot remained unpunished, while many men of the people were put to the question by the Eight, the which council had positively provoked the disorders it was its mission to prevent. The Signory sent an edict to all the churches, forbidding monks or friars of any Order to preach.[1] And on the 20th of May, a long and noisy *Pratica* was held, in which, while proposing measures for the re-establishment of the

[1] Burlamacchi, p. 16; Nardi, Parenti, Barsanti, Cinozzi, Violi. *Vide* Appendix to the Italian edition, doc. iii., the "Deliberations of the Signory."

public peace, an effort was also made to obtain an edict for Savonarola's banishment. But this attempt had no chance of success, since all soon perceived that it would rouse too much hatred and scandal among the Florentine people.[1] The Arrabbiati, however, were by no means discouraged by this check, having other and far greater hopes in view. The Papal excommunication, that had only been delayed pending the result of Piero de' Medici's attempt, was now daily expected. The Pope also had probably counted on great results from the Ascension Day plot, the preparations for which must have been brought to his knowledge by Frà Mariano. This man had fled to Rome directly after the failure of the Medicean expedition, and never relaxed his efforts to urge the Pope to destroy Savonarola, whom he styled "an instrument of the devil, and the perdition of the Florentine people." After the Ascension Day riot the Pope, although increasingly enraged at the Friar's daring, was rejoiced to see that at this moment the latter's friends were as weak as his enemies were strong. In fact the Arrabbiati now wrote pressingly to the effect that the times were ripe for Savonarola's excommunication, and that further delay would be useless. "Thus, finding the matter prepared," so wrote the orator Becchi to the Ten, "the medicine took instant effect;"[2] that is to say, the bull of excommunication was despatched.

[1] Some information relating to this affair is also to be found in the "Lettera a Messer Lorenzo de Filippo Strozzi," of the 20th of May, 1497, from which we have already quoted: "Throughout the territory, as thou knowest, there has been great noise concerning the Friar; and it seemed as if things were coming to a point that would have relieved some of our souls. And to avoid ill results, a great *Pratica* was held on the affair this morning; and the Signory and others, as I hear, are labouring to establish real peace among the citizens, and sweep away these parties for and against the Friar, which are a hurt and dishonour to the public in general and every citizen in particular. And for the sake of peace it is proposed to exile the Friar."

[2] Letter to the Ten, dated 18th of May, 1497, given in Gherardi's "Nuovi Documenti," at pp. 91–92.

Foreseeing the storm that was about to break over his head, Savonarola tried to avert it by addressing a letter to the Pope, dated the 22nd of May. Assuming a conciliatory but also dignified tone, he began with these words: "Wherefore is my Lord angered with his servant?" And continuing in the same strain, he complained that the Pope had always refused to listen to him, while giving a ready ear to the false charges alleged against him by his enemies, although these were triumphantly refuted by the evidence of his public and printed sermons. He likewise complained bitterly of the shameless audacity of Frà Mariano, who, after having personally attacked the Pope in his sermons, using language unfit for the pulpit, and being consequently reproved by Savonarola himself before the whole congregation,[1] now perfidiously brought the same charge against him who had never made personal attacks on any one, far less on the ruler of the faithful, the vicar of Christ. He again declared his submission to the authority of the Church, asserting that he preached no doctrine save that of the Holy Fathers, as would speedily be made apparent to the whole world by means of his "Triumph of the Cross." He then concluded the letter as follows: "For if all human aid fail me, I will put my trust in God, and make manifest to all the world the iniquity of those who may perhaps be driven to repent the work they have in hand."

But at the date of this letter,[2] the excommunicatory

[1] Savonarola frequently alludes to the violence of Frà Mariano's sermons, which was indeed a matter of general notoriety.

[2] It was dated May 22, 1497, and was wrongly believed by all to be a reply to the brief of excommunication. But the brief, written on the 3rd of the month, and, as we shall see, delayed by the way, had not yet reached Florence. The exact date of its arrival is not mentioned by all the historians; but all agree that it came towards the end of the month; and before that time no manuscript letters examined by us contain any allusion to the excommunication. Parenti (vol. ii. of the original MS.

brief of the 13th of May was already despatched. Only by a strange and, as regarded Savonarola, fortunate chance, circumstances contributed to lessen its efficacy. It had been indited in the very unusual form of a circular letter to the Friars of the Santissima Annunziata and other convents,[1] almost as though the Pope were afraid to couch it in the more solemn form of an address to believers in general. It was entrusted to the care of Gian Vittorio da Camerino, but on reaching Siena this theologian feared to proceed, lest he should be seized and torn to pieces by the followers of the Friar.[2] Accordingly, he retraced his steps, and the brief being consigned to other hands, only reached Florence towards the end of May. Even then, many of the clergy hesitated to publish it, on account of its unusual form, and in the absence of the Apostolic Commission customarily charged with that duty.[3]

The terms of this brief, or circular letter, were no less strange than its form.

"We have heard from many persons worthy of belief," so wrote the Pope, "that *a certain* Frà Girolamo Savonarola, at this present, *said to be* vicar of St. Mark's in Florence, hath disseminated pernicious doctrines to the scandal and great grief of simple souls. We had already

at sheet 11[1]) and Landucci (p. 153) fix the date of publication on the 18th of June. If the letter of Savonarola, recapitulated above, had been written in reply to the excommunication, it would have had no sense. Even Herr Meier seems to have perceived this, but could not discover how to rectify the error, since, like many others, he considered that the brief of the 13th must have certainly reached Florence by the 16th or 17th of May. Savonarola's letter is given by Quétif, vol. ii. p. 125.

[1] *I.e.*, Santa Maria Novella, Santa Croce, and Santo Spirito. Landucci, "Diario," p. 153. See, too, Appendix to the Italian edition, doc. vi.

[2] He had already suffered imprisonment as one of the most turbulent of Savonarola's foes, and been declared a rebel, as may also be seen by a letter of the Ten, published in Gherardi's "Nuovi Documenti," and by one from Gian Vittorio himself at p. 96 of the same.

[3] Burlamacchi, Pico, Barsanti, Marchese, Nardi, Parenti, &c.

commanded him, by his vows of holy obedience, to suspend his sermons, and come to us to seek pardon for his errors; but he refused to obey, and alleged various excuses, which we too graciously accepted,[1] hoping to convert him by our clemency. But, on the contrary, he persisted still more in his obstinacy; wherefore, by a second brief (7th of November, 1496)[2] we commanded him, under pain of excommunication, to unite the Convent of St. Mark to the Tusco-Roman Congregation recently created by us. But even then he still persisted in his stubbornness, thus, *ipso facto*, incurring censure. Therefore we now command ye, on all festivals, and in the presence of the people, to declare the said Frà Girolamo excommunicate, and to be held as such by all men, *for his failure to obey our apostolic admonitions and commands.* And, under pain of the same penalty, all are forbidden to assist him, hold intercourse with him, or approve him either by word or deed, inasmuch as he is an excommunicated person and *suspected* of heresy—Given in Rome this 13th day of May, 1497." [3]

Thus, notwithstanding the many accusations brought against the doctrines of the Friar, the Pope only designates him as *suspected* of heresy, and even this only on

[1] This proves the truth of Savonarola's assertion; *i.e.*, that the Pope had accepted his excuses for refusing to go to Rome.

[2] "Quod cum eo, in sua duritie persistente, secus eveniret, aliis nostris literis in forma Brevis, sub data septimi novembris," &c. This shows that the proposed Tusco-Roman union had been imposed as a punishment.

[3] *Vide* Appendix to the Italian edition, doc. v. Padre Marchese was rather doubtful whether this was the real brief of excommunication, because of its irregular form; but from Savonarola's letters and sermons there does not seem to have been any other, and we shall return to the question elsewhere. Professor Del Lungo has since discovered the original of the copy sent from Rome to the Friars of the Badia, and has published it in the "Archivio Storico Italiano," new series, vol. xviii. part i. p. 17. It is dated 13th of May, whereas certain old copies of it are dated on the 12th. As separate copies were sent from Rome to the different convents, possibly all were not written on the same day.

hearsay, and therefore implicitly avows that he had never examined into the charges himself. The sentence of excommunication, accordingly, was only inflicted on account of the Friar's disobedience in declining to unite St. Mark's to the new Tusco-Roman Congregation. As we have already said, and as is proved by the terms of the brief, this junction was imposed as a punishment, or rather as a pretext for compelling Savonarola to silence. The latter had opposed it, with the best of reasons, showing the Pope that it was not only his right, but his duty to reject a measure that would have such grievous results for his convent; and likewise that the matter did not depend on the Pope alone, but required the consent of all the brethren of St. Mark's. However this may have been, the terms of the excommunication proved to the world that the Church could not tax Savonarola's doctrines with heresy; while as regarded his refusal to go to Rome, the Pope having accepted his excuses at the time, had no right now to accuse him of disobedience, save on certain points of little importance, regarding which Alexander himself had frequently sent contradictory orders, and used merely as pretexts.

This event, as may well be imagined, threw all Florence in confusion. The Arrabbiati were triumphant, and wrote continual letters to Rome in order to neutralize the effect of every argument Bracci and Becchi were then urging in the Friar's defence. These orators wrote, in fact, that the Pope was much pacified by Savonarola's epistle, and seemed to repent of having despatched the excommunication.[1] But they added that the hostile car-

[1] On the 17th of June Bracci wrote to the Ten, that he had found the Pope well disposed to revoke the brief, but for the arrival from Florence of private letters and intelligence to the contrary effect. The Pope told the Cardinal of Perugia that "this publication" (of the brief), "*hoc tempore facta*, was displeasing to him, and was *omnino preter* mentem suam." Afterwards his mood entirely changed. (Gherardi, "Nuovi Documenti," p. 98.)

dinals, Frà Mariano and the Arrabbiati were spitting fire and flame, and that the matter had been accordingly handed over to the six cardinals charged to reform the Church. The real point, they wrote in conclusion, is that the Pope is most anxious for the Florentines to break their treaty with France and join in the League. This is why he always promises the surrender of Pisa, and this explains his hatred for Savonarola, who keeps you firm to the French alliance.[1]

Nevertheless the excommunication was launched, and on the 18th of June finally proclaimed with great solemnity in the churches of Santa Croce, Santa Maria Novella, Santo Spirito, the Annunziata, and the Badia, to all of which it was addressed. It was impressively read by torchlight, in the presence of a considerable number of friars and amid the tolling of small bells. And at the concluding word the lights were extinguished, and each church plunged in silence and gloom.[2]

It would be difficult to give an adequate idea of the outcry, disorder, and lamentation prevailing in the city. A few days afterwards, on the 24th of June, the festival of St. John, the patron of Florence, the friars of St. Augustine and St. Francis refused to take part in it if the monks of St. Mark's were allowed to do so. Accordingly the latter, and also the brethren of St. Dominic at Fiesole, were ordered to remain in their cloisters that day. The insolence of the Compagnacci, being encouraged by the Eight and the

[1] Gherardi, "Nuovi Documenti," p. 95 and fol. This is clearly proved by letters of Bracci, Becchi, and the Ten, given in this work.

[2] The "Vita Latina," at sheet 30[t], and Burlamacchi, at p. 92, give a different account of the ceremony. According to them the friars of all these different churches were collected in the Duomo, and it was there that the excommunication was solemnly proclaimed. But Luca Landucci ("Diario," p. 153), who was present in the Church of Santo Spirito, and Parenti (vol. ii. original MS., sheet 11[t]) recount the affair as it really occurred. Also, seeing that Savonarola soon resumed his sermons in the Duomo, it would be difficult to believe that the sentence of excommunication could have been proclaimed in that church.

majority of the Signory, now passed all limits, so that great license, both of speech and action, prevailed. Savonarola was slandered on all sides, and swarms of sonnets, anonymous ballads, indecent tracts, and monkish diatribes were published against his doctrines. At night, when the brethren were attending service in the choir, the mob gathered round the convent shouting and singing, and committing much damage by showers of stones. And, being allowed full impunity, the audacity of the rabble increased. Immoral practices returned as if by magic; the churches were deserted, the taverns filled; women resumed the immodest mode of dress and the jewels they had discarded, and again paraded the streets attired with dazzling luxury. Scented gallants again sang indecent songs under the windows of their mistresses without exciting the latters' blushes. In less than a month Florence seemed to have gone back to the days of Lorenzo the Magnificent; all thoughts of patriotism and freedom were forgotten. Such were the first results of the brief of excommunication![1]

Nevertheless Savonarola preserved his composure, and, without precipitating matters, began to take measures of defence. On the 19th of June, 1497, he wrote an "Epistle against surreptitious excommunication, addressed to all Christians beloved of God." This, after recapitulating all that he had so often before said concerning his doctrines, concluded as follows: "The lukewarm need have no fear,[2] for this excommunication is invalid both in the sight of God and man, inasmuch as it is based on the false reasons and accusations devised by our enemies. I have always submitted and even still submit to the authority of the Church, nor will ever fail in my obedience; but no one

[1] All this is minutely described in the "Vita Latina," Burlamacchi, Nardi, Violi, &c.

[2] This epistle is also given by Quétif, vol. ii. p. 185. The fifteenth-century edition is undated.

is bound to yield to commands opposed to charity and the law of God, since in such case our superiors are no longer the representatives of the Lord. Meanwhile, seek by prayer to make ready for that which may befall ye; for, should the matter proceed, we will make the truth known to all the world." Then, in a second letter, undated, *Contra sententiam excommunicatonis contra se nuper iniuste latam*, he set himself to prove, by long quotations from Gerson, that no one should be cowed by unjust condemnations, and that to meekly submit to every sentence pronounced "*est asinina patientia, timor leporinus et fatuus.*" Still citing Gerson's words, he went on to speak, although in general terms, of making appeal to the council, declaring that it was not merely allowable, but obligatory to resist the Pope in cases where the Pontiff tried to enforce his authority to the detriment of the Church. "Nor does the Christian commit sin," the quotation concluded, "in accepting the aid of the secular power, in order to escape from unjust excommunication; for unjust sentences of this description are mere violence, and the law of nature prescribes that we should repulse force by force. And we are specially justified in so doing in cases where care can be taken to avoid scandal, and to enlighten the faint-hearted, who believe the Sovereign Pontiff to be almost as God, having power over both heaven and earth. It is needful to show humility and meekness to him, but, when humility fails, then *accipienda est animosa libertas.*" And to these words from Gerson, Savonarola added: "All this speaks admirably in our favour; nevertheless so great is the ignorance of mankind at this day, that many would hold not only ourselves to be excommunicate, but all who frequent the convent; while others, being still more ignorant, would add that it were even necessary to shun all intercourse with those who attend our church. They do not know what was said by

Martin V. at the Council of Constance, the which was afterwards confirmed by that of Basle—*i.e.*, that we are no wise bound to shun the excommunicated, unless expressly and personally commanded so to do." [1]

Savonarola's enemies lost no time in communicating these letters to the Pope, who could scarcely be expected to feel gratified by their contents. But happily for the Friar, amid the continual changes of government in Florence, the new Signory for July and August was composed of his friends; hence, instead of leaving his defence to the Ten, he was able to write in his own name to Bracci and Becchi, hotly urging them to press the revocation of the interdict.[2] And to give greater weight to his demand, he had previously called a meeting of all the leading citizens on the 5th of July, in order to hear their advice. They all spoke in Savonarola's favour, enumerated the benefits he had conferred on the city, and counselled him to make an energetic appeal for the withdrawal of the excommunicatory brief. Many pointed out that this was not a religious, but a political question, and that it was entirely owed to the efforts of the foes to popular government in Florence. Francesco Gualterotti, speaking in the name of the Ten of War, expressed himself even more clearly than the rest. "My honourable fathers and colleagues are anxious that peace and order should be maintained in the city since the safety of the Friar will thus be assured. It is their opinion that had the censure of the Church emanated directly and solely from the Pope, it would have behooved us to let it follow its due course. But seeing that it really emanated from this city, they hold that some way must be found to quiet and extinguish it here, so that the Pope (whom I now venture to name)

[1] This Latin epistle is given in Quétif, vol. ii. p. 191. The fifteenth-century edition is undated.

[2] These letters are included among the "Documenti," published by Padre Marchese.

may not hear our follies, nor our city be injured by his censure. And they likewise believe that, at our request, the revocation of the brief may easily be obtained." [1]

After this meeting the Signory not only wrote to the orators afresh, but on the 8th of July despatched a letter to the Pope himself in the following terms: "Most Holy Father, we are deeply afflicted to have incurred the ban of the Church, not only because of the respect always entertained by our Republic for the Holy Keys, but because we see that a most innocent man has been wrongfully and maliciously accused to your Holiness. We deem this Friar to be a good and pious man, and thoroughly versed in the Christian faith. He has laboured many years for the welfare of our people, and no fault has ever been detected either in his life or his doctrine. But, as virtue is never free from the attacks of envy, so there be many of our people who invert the name of honesty and think to rise to greatness by attacking the good. Wherefore we fervently implore your Holiness, in your paternal and divine charity, to use your own judgment in this matter, and remove the weight of your ban not only from Father Girolamo Savonarola, but from all those who may have incurred it. Your Holiness could do no greater kindness to the Republic, especially in this time of pestilence, in which bans are of grave peril to men's souls." [2]

Throughout the remainder of the year the Republic carried on an energetic correspondence in Savonarola's

[1] Florence Archives, "Consulte e Pratiche," Registro, 65, at sheet 43. I have reason to believe that no other modern writer has hitherto made use of these "Pratiche," which were discovered by myself in the Florence Archives. Since my discovery of them, however, Signor Lupi, of the Pisa Archives, has published the "Pratica" of the 5th of July, together with most of those concerning Savonarola in the "Archivio Storico Italiano," series iii. vol. i. part i.

[2] This letter, which is in Latin, is given by Quétif, vol. ii. p. 127, and is included in Padre Marchese's "Documenti," &c. "Archivio Storico Italiano, Appendice," vol. viii. p. 155.

defence, since, fortunately for him, the various Signories elected were all favourable to his cause, and the Council of Ten was always devoted to him.[1] The orator Becchi, a weak and credulous man, proved of little use;[2] but Ser Alessandro Bracci achieved good results by his energy and goodwill. He won over the Cardinals of Perugia, Benevento, and Capaccio, solicited and conciliated the Cardinal of Naples, who was no longer well inclined to St. Mark's; and availed himself of the aid of Giorgio Benigno and Giovanni Nasi, who were then resident in Rome, and had always laboured in the Friar's defence. And, while all these efforts were being used, with some hope of success, not only to soothe the Pope's wrath, but to win his favour, a very singular offer was made to Savonarola. It is declared that the Cardinal of Siena[3] sent him word that if the sum of 5,000 crowns were paid to a certain creditor of his, he would undertake to obtain the removal of the ban. This impudent offer was not without precedent, since anything could then be had for money in

[1] Many other letters were despatched by the Government. One dated 21st of July praises Ser Alessandro and Messer Ricciardo for their efforts to gain Savonarola the goodwill of the cardinals; urges them to still greater zeal, and inquires the names of those hostile to the measure. The Signory again wrote to Bracci on the 1st of August, praising and congratulating him on the fact of "His Holiness seeming kind and well disposed to us," and they also forwarded two letters of thanks for Cardinals Capaccio and di Perugia, who had used their influence in the Friar's favour. On the 11th of August they wrote that every possible effort must be made to gain over the six cardinals entrusted with the reform of the Church, and on whom Savonarola's fate then seemed to depend. On the 26th of September they wrote to Cardinal Caraffa, urging him to do his best with the Pope; wrote again to the same effect on the 13th of October; and on the 7th of November despatched two letters which will be mentioned farther on. *Vide* Padre Marchese's "Documenti," &c., "Archivio Stor. Ital. Appendice," vol. viii. p. 157 and fol.

[2] As will be seen by his letters, he was actually persuaded that the Medici were friendly to Savonarola. This was one of the reasons that had compelled the Signory to despatch Bracci as orator extraordinary to Rome.

[3] Afterwards Pius III.

Rome; but Savonarola, as may well be imagined, indignantly rejected it, and said, when writing to a friend: "I should deem myself far more deeply banned were I to accept absolution at such a price."[1] But at all events the affair was another proof that the Holy Father was then showing a disposition to yield, and the Friar might have been justified in thinking that all would go well.

Just at this time one of those atrocious tragedies occurred with which the Borgia family were accustomed to stir the horror of the world, even in an age that was among the most scandalous ever recorded in history. The Duke of Gandia, the Pope's eldest son, was killed by a dagger-thrust on the night of the 14th of June, and his corpse thrown into the Tiber. His brother, Cesare Borgia, Cardinal of Valencia, was the murderer, having been impelled, it was said, to the crime by unnatural jealousy on his sister Lucrezia's account, and also by an unbounded ambition that could tolerate no equals in power. This monstrous deed stirred even the heart of Alexander Borgia to agonies of paternal grief. For the first time in his life he seemed to repent of his numerous sins, and determined to renounce them. He had accordingly withdrawn into strict solitude, and appointed six cardinals to reform the Church and thus remedy the many evils to which it was a prey.[2] This was the commission charged, as we have said, to decide on Savonarola's case.

The latter, rejoiced at any suggestion of reform or signs of true penitence in the Pope, determined to profit by the opportunity, and addressed an epistle to Alexander

[1] Letter to Ludovico Pittorio, Chancellor to Duke Ercole I. of Ferrara. *Vide* Padre Marchese's "Documenti," &c., loc. cit., p. 129. The offer made by the Cardinal of Siena is also related in the "Vita Latina," at sheet 31; in Burlamacchi, p. 92; and is confirmed by Padre Marchese in a note to the letter quoted above.

[2] *Vide* Guicciardini, "Storia d'Italia," and other contemporary historians.

towards the close of the month. In this, after dexterously trying to comfort him in his present affliction, he encouraged him to persevere in his Christian purpose, and concluded by pleading his own cause in the following terms: "Most Blessed Father, the faith that worketh miracles, inspireth all noble deeds, and is sealed by the blood of the martyrs, can alone give peace and true consolation to the heart of man. Faith surpasseth sense and reason, lifteth us above this world, transporteth us to the unseen, and expandeth our spirit. Faith giveth us strength to bear adversity and rejoice in tribulation; wherefore it is written, that the just man shall never be cast down, and the just man is he that liveth in the Lord by faith. Blessed is he that is called to this gift of faith. Let your Holiness therefore reply to the blissful summons, so that your mourning be turned to joy. The Lord in His mercy passeth over all our sins. I announce things of the which I am assured, and for these things I am willing to endure all persecutions. But let your Beatitude turn a favouring eye on this work of faith, for which I labour without cease, and give ear no longer to the impious. Thus the Lord will bestow on you the essence of joy, instead of the spirit of grief; inasmuch as all my predictions are true, and none that resisteth the Lord can ever know peace. Charity moveth me to write these things, Most Blessed Father, and the hope that your Beatitude may receive true consolation from God; for the thunders of His wrath will ere long be heard, and blessed will be those that have put their trust in Him. May the Lord of all mercy console your Holiness in your tribulation!" [1]

It was undoubtedly strange that the excommunicated Prior of St. Mark's should write to the Pope and try to

[1] This letter, taken from the Marcian Library, in Venice, was published by Perrens in the Appendix to vol. i. of his work, at page 476. Both in the Venetian MS. and that of the Riccardi Library 2053 it bears date vii. Kal. Julii.

console him for the death of his son by exhortations to a godly life and repentance. But, at the moment, Alexander seemed in no wise offended; on the contrary, he showed a disposition to be gracious to the Friar—an evident sign that he was still under the influence of genuine grief and remorse. But this was a brief and fugitive mood. He soon returned to his usual scandalous mode of life, with increased zest, and then made loud complaints against Savonarola for having dared to insult his fatherly sorrow.[1]

What is certain is, that while Savonarola and the Signory were working in one direction, many were using their best efforts in another. The Arrabbiati had already forwarded a circular to Rome signed by most of their party, in which all the old accusations against the Friar were once more repeated. On this being made known in Florence, by means of the ambassador, two other circulars were immediately prepared in support of the Friar. The first of these bore the signatures of all the two hundred and fifty brethren in the convent, who, extolling their Prior's life and doctrines, besought the Pope to remove the ban and gain favour in the sight of the Lord by aiding in the sacred enterprise. The second, reiterating all the same things, was signed by a great number of the leading citizens. When first started in July, three hundred and sixty-three signatures were quickly collected, and more would have been added, had not the alarming increase of the plague interrupted almost every kind of business.[2]

[1] The Roman ambassador speaks of this in his letters. *Vide* in Padre Marchese, doc. xx., Bonsi's letter to the Ten. It is stated in this that the Pope complained, among other things, that Savonarola "had reproved him for the death of his son."

[2] In the Appendix to the Italian edition, doc. vii., these two declarations or letters to the Pope will be found. Among the names inscribed on the second is that of one Niccolò, son of Alessandro Machiavelli, erroneously believed by Mons. Perrens to be the famous secretary of the Republic. But the latter was the son of Bernardo Machiavelli. On the

There were already from fifty to sixty deaths daily, and although this was not considered a great number, it was sadly ominous of a still worse state of things, particularly when all Florence [1] was so densely overcrowded with strangers. The citizens now fled to their country houses, and a general panic set in. But while all were deserting the city and forsaking the business of life, Savonarola, as every one may conceive, undertook new and arduous labours. It was his duty, he felt, in this public emergency, to bring succour and comfort to the afflicted. Although precluded by his excommunication from going about among the people as a minister of the Church,[2] it will be seen that he had no light task to perform, when we remember that he had the care of 250 monks, many of whom were novices, all shut up in one convent, where the most stringent precautions were required to prevent contagion. In fact, before long, one of the community sickened, and both the plague and its terrors had gained foothold in St. Mark's. The more timid brethren wished to take flight, others besought their Prior to provide for his own safety, and several citizens placed their villas at his disposal. But Savonarola was not likely to shrink from his duty at a moment such as this. He profited by his friends' offer of hospitality to send all the novices and younger monks, including his own brother Maurelio, into the country. Thus the numbers in the convent were thinned, and he quietly remained there with a few of his more tried and devoted followers. He read to them, with

9th of July a *Pratica* was held (*vide* Florence Archives, cod. cit., at sheet 46), to decide if anything should be done with regard to these circulars; but no decision was arrived at.

[1] See Savonarola's letter to his brother Alberto, dated 21st of July. In Padre Marchese's "Documenti," &c., loc. cit., p. 128.

[2] By forgetting the consequences of excommunication, Mons. Perrens was led to make the erroneous statement that Savonarola had shown timidity and indifference during the plague.

comments, the Lamentations of Jeremiah,[1] Jonah's prophecies, and the history of Samson, and did his best to sustain their courage.

Meanwhile he sent frequent and affectionate letters to the distant members of his flock, exhorting them to face the danger with courage, and reproving the more timid for their fears. "I am using every effort," he wrote to Frà Paolo del Beccuto, who wished to leave his own convent, "to preserve our brethren from danger; but I find some of them more timid than laymen, which is a pusillanimity unworthy of ministers of religion, who should rather seek death than fear it. We must trust in the Lord, not in flight. Wherefore I hold that you ought not to absent yourself from your convent at present. The friars here meet death joyfully, as though they were going to a festival. All those tending the sick keep their health. To-day, after conversing with me, Frate Antonio da San Quintino was suddenly taken ill."[2] All Savonarola's letters at this period show much tenderness for his brethren and his family; singular firmness and serenity of spirit in the midst of these numerous perils. On the 24th of July he wrote to his brother, Maestro Alberto, at Ferrara, giving him news of their other brother, Maurelio, one of the community of St. Mark's. "Frà Maurelio is away from Florence on account of the pestilence, which, though not very severe as yet, is beginning to look serious. We

[1] These are probably the discourses of which the rough, unfinished draft is contained in the little volume entitled "Alcuni sermoni devoti di F. Jeronimo Savonarola, sopra il principio della Cantica ed altri luoghi." Venice, 1556. These sermons on the Song of Solomon are only in outline; but there are some less imperfect fragments of them in Italian. The original autograph is in the Codex at St. Mark's, to which we have previously referred.

[2] It is dated 18th of August, 1497, and a Latin copy of it is to be found in Codex 2053 of the Riccardi Library. An incorrect Italian version was published at Venice in 1537 and 1547. It is also included in Mansi's "Addizioni" to Baluzio, and among the letters edited by Quétif, although wrongly dated in the latter, 8th of August.

have fifty or sixty deaths a day in the city—some say as many as one hundred—and nothing is seen save crosses and corpses. We are well, thanks to God; nor have I left the convent, although I have sent away more than seventy of the monks; for, as to myself, I am not afraid, and only desire to comfort the afflicted."[1] Later, on the 14th of August, he again wrote to the same brother: "Have no fear for me in the midst of the plague, for God will aid me. Although friends have invited me to many places, I could not forsake my flock, and therefore remain to console the afflicted. Likewise it is marvellous to behold the cheerfulness of those called away: friars and laity, men and women die, praising the Lord with their last breath."[2]

Throughout this trying period Savonarola's energy was unwearied. He wrote a great number of letters, exhorting men to bear their tribulations in a quiet spirit and without fear of the excommunication; but it was in fighting the plague that he worked hardest of all. Nor did he think only of his monks, but also did his best by word and pen, by publishing pamphlets, and every other means, to encourage the laity, for whose benefit he composed an "Epistle to all the Chosen," sub-entitled "A Medicinal Treatise against the Plague."[3] This contained seven rules—for preserving body and mind by temperance and tranquillity, recommending moderation in food, gaiety of spirit, and charity to the sick. "Succour ye the sick," he said, "serve them and minister unto them in all ways, even if they be your enemies."[4]

[1] Among the "Documenti" brought out by Padre Marchese, letter x.

[2] Padre Marchese, "Documenti," &c., letter xi.

[3] Written on the 15th of July, 1497; afterwards published with another epistle and a few tractates in Florence, but undated; and then in 1538 at Venice, in the little volume entitled "Alcuni devotissimi trattati di F. Jeronimo Savonarola," &c.

[4] During these months Savonarola addressed numerous letters to his principal friends and adherents in different parts of Italy to inculcate virtuous and religious precepts.

Fortunately the plague did less havoc than was feared, for at the beginning of August it had already diminished, and towards the end of the month almost disappeared.[1] The citizens returned from the country and resumed their affairs; the convent of St. Mark was again opened to the people, and on the 15th of the month the festival of the Madonna was celebrated in the inner cloister by a public and solemn thanksgiving for deliverance from peril. The city resumed its ordinary aspect, and all hoped at last for peace and tranquillity after the agitations and dangers of the year.

[1] Its violence only lasted two months and a half, and the mortality from it was never very high.

# CHAPTER III.

*THE ARREST OF LAMBERTO DELL' ANTELLA. HIS REVELATIONS CONCERNING THE MEDICI PLOT. THE TRIAL AND CONDEMNATION OF ALL THE ACCUSED.*

(1497.)

UT the truce hoped for by the Florentines on the cessation of the plague was broken before it began, by an event causing more commotion in the city than anything else that had occurred since the year 1494. While Valori and Tosinghi were engaged in unravelling the threads of Piero's conspiracy, they surprised a certain Lamberto dell' Antella, one of the proscribed, on a clandestine journey to his villa, with a letter to his brother-in-law, Francesco Gualterotti, at that time a member of the Ten. This letter promised minute revelations of all Piero's schemes, and the discovery of certain matters of the highest importance to the Republic.[1]

As an old and faithful adherent of the Medici, Antella was certainly qualified to give full information of their

[1] Nardi, Machiavelli, and many other historians speak of the capture of this Antella; and the Milanese orator in Florence also makes frequent reference to the affair. *Vide* Appendix to the Italian edition, where the letter brought by Antella is given in doc. i., and those written on the subject by the Milanese orator in doc. ii.

designs. During the revolution of 1494 he and his brother Alessandro were prisoners in the Stinche, and while there received many cheering promises and encouragements from Piero, who was then in Rome. Accordingly, on making their escape, they hastened to his presence, but he received them with marked coldness, and speedily behaved to them with his usual brutality. "He kept us continually on the move," writes Lamberto dell' Antella, "in order to satisfy his mad wish of returning to Florence, and then treated us worse than dogs." Piero de' Medici, in fact, seemed unable to live without having some one to maltreat and oppress. Nevertheless the two Antella submitted to all this, and accompanied the tyrant on his expedition to the walls of Florence and his flight back to Siena; but in the latter city they chanced to incur his suspicions, and were immediately imprisoned by his command. So great was Piero's cruelty, so furious his animosity against these old and faithful adherents, that, after leaving Siena, he sent several express messengers back to Pandolfo Petrucci, the virtual lord of that Republic, begging him to cast the two brothers into the *Carnaio*, a dungeon so terrible that none ever left it alive. But Petrucci, notwithstanding his friendship for Piero, had no mind to commit murder for his sake, and liberated the prisoners on condition that they were to be fined 2,000 florins if they attempted to quit the Sienese territories. But they were too anxious to revenge themselves on Piero to submit to delay, and fled towards Florence at the first opportunity. Lamberto considered it a delightful stroke of luck, when about the 1st of August he was seized and taken before the magistrates with his letter on his person, in the manner we have described.[1]

[1] These particulars are derived from the letter found on Antella's person, and from the confession he afterwards wrote. According to the information given by the Ferrarese orator (Cappelli, p. 86, doc. 119), the capture occurred on the 4th of August. In a letter of the 10th of

But the Eight, on finding and reading this letter, followed the barbarous custom of the time by immediately putting poor Lamberto to torture; and after giving him at least four turns of the rack, interrogated him closely on every point, so that he should confess the *pure truth*. On noting down his replies, and finding that several citizens of great influence and high reputation were implicated in the plot,[1] they carried the affair before the Signory, declaring that they must decline to give judgment in so weighty a case. The Signory, however, made answer that, according to the statutes, the Eight alone were empowered to judge political offences.[2] Nevertheless, in view of the importance of the case, five Arroti [3] and seven officers of the Ten were chosen to assist them in carrying on the trial. Thereupon the business was more closely investigated, and Lamberto dell' Antella, being offered free pardon, penned a lengthy report of all Piero de' Medici's schemes and of the names of his adherents in Florence.[4] He even revealed certain preliminaries of a fresh plot, by which Piero was to be secretly brought into Florence on the night of the approaching 15th of August. Many of the citizens being away in the country—some to enjoy the summer season, and others to escape the plague—Piero

August, addressed by the Signory to their ambassador in Rome, the affair is mentioned as having already taken place. Florence Archives, "Signori," "Carteggio," "Missive," "Minutari," 16, at sheet 400.

[1] The above-quoted despatch of the Signory states that Antella's arrest has led "to the discovery of the root of certain malignant humours in persons who *cannot be prosecuted*," but tries to attenuate the importance of the affair by adding that "these be all *vain attempts*, inasmuch as no republic could be more united in its intent to destroy tyranny than our own."

[2] For the whole narrative of this trial we have always referred to authentic documents, and among the historians have preferred to rely on the authority of Pitti's "Istoria Fiorentina," in the "Archivio Storico Italiano," vol. i. pp. 42–50, which furnishes a most minute account of these events, and one clearly based upon documentary evidence.

[3] Citizens qualified to give advice in emergencies.

[4] This is the narrative to which we have frequently referred.

de' Medici hoped to be able to rouse a general revolt in his favour by distributing bread and money to the hungry populace, and allowing them to sack the houses of the rich, and, having once gained possession of the Palace, to assume the government of the city.[1] It was a mad design and too audacious for Piero to venture to carry out; nevertheless the preliminary intrigues which had been woven served to show his intent, and proved that the Republic was still exposed to great danger.

In the midst of these agitations the twenty citizens charged to try the case met in council after a careful examination of the evidence, and took their oath to administer justice with strict impartiality, regardless of the rank or influence of the persons implicated in the plot. They then ordained that the Piazza should be guarded by armed men; that the *condottieri* (mercenary captains) should hold their troops ready for action at a moment's notice; and that no one should leave the city. They also called out the guards of the Signory, and, to avoid exciting suspicion, sent them to summon, in the Signory's name, all the citizens most deeply compromised by Antella's revelations. Many instantly fled; others, on the contrary, obeyed the summons; and the final result of the trial was that five of the persons in the magistrates' hands were found guilty of high treason, and, according to the law, deserving of capital punishment.

Bernardo del Nero, aged seventy-five years, was the most inportant of these criminals on account of his great influence and sagacity. In point of fact the only real charge proved against him was that of having known of the plot and yet failed to denounce it; the which crime was held to be all the more heinous, since he was Gonfalonier of the Republic at that time. Next in order of guilt were Giannozzo Pucci, a youth of great

[1] Nardi speaks of this in his "Istoria di Firenze," vol. i. p. 133.

talent, and Lorenzo Tornabuoni, who was the general admiration of Florence as a model of grace and fashion. The popular hatred burnt most fiercely against these men, who, after being acknowledged partizans of Piero, to whom indeed Tornabuoni was related,[1] had, by their constant attendance on Savonarola's sermons, long contrived to make every one believe them to be his most zealous adherents. The other two persons inculpated were Giovanni Cambi,[2] a wealthy merchant, and Niccolò Ridolfi, head of the family of that name, and who was also connected with the Medici.[3]

The trial being concluded, the twelve additional citizens withdrew, leaving the Eight alone to pronounce the verdict. But being decidedly unwilling to face the hatred of so many powerful families, these again appealed to the Signory, who again declined to assume an office that was not legally incumbent on them. At last the Gonfalonier, Messer Domenico Bartoli, seeing the culpable weakness of the magistrates in refusing to fulfil their duty from fear of the great, proposed to submit the case to the decision of the Greater Council, which, according to the new law, constituted the supreme court of appeal. But the counsel for the defence resolutely opposed this suggestion on the score "that it were unwise to communicate secrets of the State to so great a multitude, or to run the risk of many different opinions when the verdict of the principal magistrates should suffice."[4] The gist of the matter was

[1] Piero's grandmother was a Tornabuoni.

[2] Not to be confused with Giovanni Cambi, the historian, who was entirely devoted to the popular party; nor with the "*rich* Cambi" of Via del Cocomero, mentioned elsewhere. The prisoner was one of the Cambi of Santa Trinità.

[3] His son had married one of Piero de' Medici's sisters. For all these particulars, *vide* Nardi, "Istorie di Firenze," i. p. 130; Cerretani; Parenti; Guicciardini, "Storia Fiorentina," chap. xv.; and Pitti.

[4] Pitti, "Storia Fiorentina," p. 43 and fol.

that, whereas on the one hand the magistrates shrank from doing their duty, the accused, on the other, being equally afraid of the laws and the fury of the people, were anxious for delay, in the hope that on the election of a new Signory things might take a decided turn in their favour. Three of the present Signory were already on their side, and having now succeeded in winning over a fourth in the person of Michele Berti, a kinsman of Bernardo del Nero, these four votes enabled them to prevent any decision hostile to their purpose.[1] Thus they gained their end, and the final sentence was referred to the judgment of a fresh Pratica, to be held on the 17th of August. This was a signal advantage; every day brought them nearer to the new election; urgent recommendations to mercy were momentarily expected from the allies,[2] to whom many pressing appeals had been sent; and Piero de' Medici was already collecting a large force in Romagna. Moreover, being manifestly guilty in the eyes of the law, the only hope of the accused was in delay. But their adversaries were perfectly aware of all this, on their side were using every effort to bring the affair to a speedy conclusion; and it was accordingly foreseen that the adjourned debate would be a pitched battle.

The Signory had requested the presence of some two hundred of the principal citizens of Florence, and although they did not all obey the summons, the meeting was attended by the sixteen Gonfaloniers of the Companies, the Twelve Worthies, the Ten of War, the Eight of Guard and Custody, the officers of the Monte, the Conservators

[1] The Signory being composed of nine members, no measure could be carried by less than six votes; the same number was required in the Eight, since two-thirds constituted the legal majority. When a decision was passed by a majority of votes, it was said *to be voted by the greater number of beans.*

[2] *Vide* Somenzi's letters to Ludovico the Moor, in doc. ii. of Appendix to the Italian edition.

of the Law, the captains of the Guelf party, many *Arroti*, and finally the Senate, a Council of Eighty, and the Signory—in all, an assembly of 136 persons. The counsel for the accused were full of hope that day, trusting, should all other means fail, that with so numerous a tribunal there would be little difficulty in obtaining a fresh postponement of the verdict. But, as soon as the depositions had been read, the Signory ordered all present to withdraw to their respective benches to consult on the verdict, after which each bench was to freely report its opinion, regardless of the old usage forbidding the expression of any view opposed to that of the Signory. The votes were quickly given to the effect that the five accused should be beheaded and their property confiscated to the State.[1] The counsel for the defence were so thunderstruck and dismayed by this verdict that they were completely paralyzed.[2] Nevertheless, remembering that four members of the Signory were in their favour, they began to protest that the words of a few individuals could not represent the opinions of all, and that every one should be allowed to vote separately. They hoped by means of so new and unprecedented a measure to throw the assembly into disorder, since many who were unaccustomed to speak in the presence of the Signory might be confused, and afford an opportunity for calling their votes in question, and obtaining fresh delays. But this design was thwarted by Francesco Valori, who promptly took his post by the Signory's table, and summoning the notary to publicly record his words, cried in a loud voice: that he judged those citizens to be deserving of death and confiscation. His example was followed by the rest, who almost all concurred in the sentence he had pronounced. In this

[1] Pitti, "Istoria Fiorentina," loc. cit.

[2] Pitti considers that the notary must have neglected to record the few contrary votes, being unable to credit that none should have been given.

way the Signory were compelled to charge the Eight with the execution of the verdict; and when these magistrates came to record their own votes, they were found to have confirmed the sentence by a majority of six against two.[1]

The defenders of the accused then felt that all was lost, but as a last resource asked the advice of Messer Guidantonio Vespucci, a celebrated jurisconsult, and one of the most powerful of the Arrabbiati. He immediately suggested an appeal to the Greater Council from the verdict of the Eight, in the manner authorized by the new law of the Six Beans. Right of appeal was immediately demanded, and when the votes of the assembly were taken, it was found that four of the Signory were in favour of it. This led to so much disagreement and disorder, that the Pratica had to be adjourned to the 21st of August. Thus, after all, the counsel for the defence had once more gained an advantage.

Meanwhile the discord in the Palace had spread through the town, and people went about everywhere crying: that justice must be done; that the country was in danger; and that the postponement of the affair from one Pratica to another might prove fatal to the Republic. At the same time anonymous letters were being circulated in Florence, fiercely denouncing the weakness of the magistrates. Public feeling was still in this state when the second Pratica met on the 21st of August, to decide whether or no the right of appeal should be granted; and it is by no means surprising that the strife should have been of the hottest. It was declared on the one side, in the exaggerated and decidedly democratic phraseology that the Mediceans were so apt in employing whenever it suited their purpose, that: "Right of appeal against the sentence of the Eight was sanctioned by the law; that the people was absolute lord of the Republic; hence that everything must be

[1] Pitti, loc. cit.

referred to the people; that the people had power of life and death over the citizens." But these words from the lips of those who had conspired for the restoration of the Medici in Florence naturally excited the indignation of the opposite party, who hotly replied: "That from the outset, as every one knew, the accused had been allowed the option of being judged by the people, but had declined to profit by it. That the law of appeal had been made solely to deprive the tribunal of the Six Beans of the power to pass sentence of death or confiscation on the citizens; and that in this case the accused had not only been condemned by the Eight and the Signory, but by the joint verdict of all the magistrates and principal citizens. Likewise that no law could grant right of appeal from a tribunal-extraordinary such as this; and that no one demanding it could have any other object in view than that of gaining time while the Republic was disturbed, the country in danger, its enemies in expectation of aid from without, and even certain members of the Signory engaged in conspiring against freedom. Can you be ignorant," they concluded, "that the tyrant is again collecting an army? Do you not see that you are opening your gates to Piero de' Medici?"[1] At this point the *Collegi*[2] were inflamed by so great a fury, that, starting to their feet, they threatened to display their banners and lead the people to demolish the houses of all who should oppose the execution of so just and unavoidable a sentence. Upon this there was a great uproar and confusion in the hall, but, in the midst of the din, the voice of Messer Francesco degli Albizzi could be heard repeatedly shouting in tones of thunder: "Let justice be done, let justice be done!" Meanwhile the defenders of the accused were

[1] *Vide* Pitti, who gives exact reports of the speeches delivered in the Pratica. *Vide* also Cerretani and Parenti.

[2] *I.e.*, the Gonfaloniers of the Companies and the Twelve Worthies, but in this instance mainly the former.

doing their best to increase the tumult, in the hope that this day also would come to an end without any decision being pronounced. In fact, evening was already at hand, and the contest still going on without any result; for the popular party were so maddened by fury that they too impeded the regular course of the debate, and thus unconsciously played into their adversaries' hands.

But at this juncture some ambassadorial despatches and private letters arrived, and, being read aloud to the meeting by the Signory, roused all to new fury. For their contents proved that the Republic was unquestionably in the greatest danger; that the enemies of Florence were intriguing on all sides, encouraged by the Duke of Milan [1] and actively aided by the Pope, and that the latter was only feigning moderation and friendship towards the Republic the better to accomplish its overthrow. Upon this a second reading of all the depositions made at the trial was demanded, in order to compare them with the evidence contained in the letters; after which the citizens withdrew to their benches to deliberate afresh; and according to usage each bench deputed a single member to express its views.[2]

The general opinion was that the capital sentence should be executed without delay; nevertheless the knowledge that the Signory were decidedly in favour of the accused caused many to hesitate and fear to speak freely. Even Guglielmo Altoviti, as the mouthpiece of the same Gon-

[1] This is confirmed by the letters of the Milanese orator, given in doc. ii. of the Appendix to the Italian edition. *Vide* also doc. ix.

[2] Nardi, Pitti, and others describe the effect produced by the arrival of these despatches. A "Frammento di Pratica," discovered by me in the "Archivio delle Riformagioni," begins a summary of the discussion in the following terms: "Our high and magnificent Signory, having read aloud several letters received from Ser Alessandro in Rome and Messer Francesco Pepi in Milan, and several more, unsigned, from other citizens resident in Rome, . . . and having demanded advice thereon," &c. (Florence Archives, "Consulte e Pratiche," Registro 65, at sheet 81 and fol.)

faloniers of the Companies, who, shortly before, had threatened to put to the sack the abodes of all persons opposed to the execution of the sentence, now declared: "That even in his bench some were disposed to concede right of appeal." But Messer Francesco Gualterotti, in the name of the Ten of Liberty, spoke more frankly, and said: "The greater disturbance you make in the city, the better will you assist our enemies' designs. It is clear that all the potentates of Italy have plotted against Florence, and that Rome is the centre of every intrigue woven against us. The object of the desired appeal is not to learn the will of the people, which has been decidedly expressed more than once, but merely to gain time, and invoke foreign aid. Nevertheless, if your Excellencies are resolved at all costs to grant right of appeal, it were best to make sure of the council first of all, and to lose no time in assembling it, since delay can lead to nought but trouble both within and without the walls. And it likewise behooves us to keep the troops in readiness to defend the Republic from all the enemies by which it is surrounded." The next to be heard were the doctors of the law, whose opinion on the question had naturally great weight; and their representative candidly declared: "that the present danger would justify their refusal to grant an appeal,[1] and that even were it granted, it must be fixed for the morrow, since the least delay might be fatal." The Eight, who were the ordinary tribunal for State offences, expressed the opinion "that right of appeal should be decidedly refused, since the city would be ruined if the defence succeeded in obtaining from the council a reversal of the sentence already pronounced." Lastly came the twelve benches of private citizens, who

[1] "According to the statutes, whenever public disturbance is feared, it is customary to refuse right of appeal." So, too, says Guicciardini in his "Storia Fiorentina," p. 160.

were almost unanimously of opinion that "the sentence should be executed, and without delay." But even this declaration concluded with the usual formula: "Nevertheless our approval will be accorded to any decision that your Excellencies may be pleased to take."[1] Such was the influence of bygone customs, not only under the new liberal *régime*, but even in the midst of this tremendous popular excitement!

It was now ten o'clock at night; so the Signory, encouraged by this moderation of tone, and noting manifest signs of weariness in the assembly, again tried to spin out the debate, in the hope of being able to dissolve the meeting without coming to any decision. But the prevailing calm suddenly changed to a tempest of fury; for Valori, divining the intention of the government, sprang to his feet like a raging lion, and with flaming eyes rushed towards the Signory, and, seizing the ballot-box, rapped it violently on the table, crying in a threatening voice: "Let justice be done, or there will be a revolt!" Luca Martini, the president for the day, was cowed by his words, and instantly put the question to the vote. Five of the Signory voted for death, but the other four being still in favour of the accused, voted for the appeal. Thereupon Valori, throwing etiquette to the winds, and without any show of respect for the Signory, shouted in a voice hoarse with rage: "Why then have your Excellencies summoned all these citizens, who every one of them, as recorded by the notary, had already voted against these plotters of novelties, these subverters of our country and destroyers of freedom? Have not all here present confirmed their vote? Do you not hear the universal cry of all who care for the public safety? Do you not feel the imminence of our danger? Your Excel-

[1] All this part of the discussion is a faithful report of the "Frammento di Pratica," before quoted.

lencies should remember that you are placed here by the people of Florence on purpose to defend the liberty of Florence, and if you betray your duty in order to favour traitorous citizens, you may be sure there will be plenty to defend so just and holy a cause, to the peril of all who are opposed to it." Then, extending his arm with a resolute gesture, he again offered the ballot-box to Martini, and the latter, being either conquered or convinced, put the sentence to the vote in the following terms: "Seeing that the counsels and reports of the magistrates, Senate, and other citizens are all in favour of execution; and seeing that delay would lead to great peril and disturbance, it is hereby ordained that without delay, this same night, the Council of Eight shall put to death the five citizens upon whom they have already pronounced sentence in this meeting." The suddenness of Martini's motion, and above all the ferocious air of Valori and the threatening gesture with which he passed round the ballot-box, had so intimidating an effect upon the four dissentient members of the Signory that they also voted for death. After which the order, already drawn up, was formally consigned to the Eight, who immediately repaired to the palace of the Captain of Justice to make arrangements for the execution.[1]

Meanwhile the defenders of the condemned men led their clients, barefooted and chained, through the assembly, hoping that their appearance and supplications might stir the pity of the crowd; but all was in vain, for the citizens could scarcely contain their rage at the sight of the criminals. The latter were then taken to the Bargello's palace[2] and left for a short space with their

[1] As we have already said, the whole of this narrative and all these speeches are faithfully compiled from Pitti, pp. 42–50, and the before-quoted "Frammento di Pratica." *Vide* Appendix to the Italian edition, doc. x.

[2] Pitti, loc. cit., Cerretani, and Nardi. According to Pitti the prisoners

confessors to prepare their souls for death. During this time Valori, who seemed to have become almost absolute master of the city, placed 300 foot-soldiers to guard the palace against any attack from the criminals' kinsmen or friends. All was already arranged in the courtyard of the Bargello, and so dense and motley a crowd poured into it from hour to hour, that, as a contemporary writer has said, "it seemed a pit of hell." There were bands of savage-looking men with weapons in their hands and vengeance in their hearts, and groups of nobles here and there, who appeared to shrink from view for fear of compromising their safety, and to be trying to hide their grief and dismay for the friends or kinsmen whose death they were about to witness. We may imagine what cruel insults and pangs of bitterness these men must have endured that night! Meanwhile the tumult of clashing weapons, curses, and yells went on increasing until two o'clock in the morning, when a funereal silence fell on the throng. For now the condemned prisoners were brought out one by one, accompanied by a criminal judge and a confessor, and led to the place of execution, where each of them in turn calmly laid his head on the block. All submitted to their fate with the utmost fortitude. Their bodies were afterwards delivered up to their kindred.

The same night, the Signory sent a despatch to Rome giving an account of the event in the following terms: "The whole city has been united against these traitorous and parricidal citizens, whose execution was desired even

were conducted to the palace of the Bargello; according to Cerretani, to that of the Captain of Justice. Both these officials long held residence in the palace adjoining the old Custom House, and near that of the Signory with which it communicated. At the time of this trial there was only a Bargello, but shortly after, as we shall see, his post was abolished, and that of the Captain of Justice re-established in its stead. It was only at a much later period that there was again a Bargello, who was then established in the palace now designated by his name, and previously known as the palace of the Podestà.

by their own kin. And it is now hoped that the State may be sound and healthy for a time, since all are bent on extirpating every other evil growth of the same kind. God have mercy on the souls of those men, for as traitors to their country, they are verily in sore need of His aid." [1]

Such was the end of five citizens, who by birth, influence, and long experience of public and private affairs had ranked among the first in the Republic. Slight punishments were inflicted upon a few others who had been privy to the attempt; but Frà Mariano da Genazzano, having made good his escape to Rome, could only be sentenced to exile, although ascertained to have been one of the most guilty. The two brothers Antella not only had their lives spared, but also their fines remitted, were allowed to bear arms, freed from the ban formerly pronounced on them, and made the recipients of other favours.[2] All the depositions and documents of this State trial were scrupulously kept secret, so that all memory of it might be as far as possible effaced [3] now the authors of the plot had expiated their crime.

An important point should next be noted; namely, that throughout this time of public ferment Savonarola had remained secluded in his convent, without taking any share in the excitement, and wholly absorbed in revising the proofs of his "Triumph of the Cross." Neither in the histories, memoirs, correspondence, or biographies of the period do we find a single word to indicate whether Savonarola was favourable or unfavourable to any of the accused. During his own trial he only alluded to the

[1] Florence Archives, "Registro di Minute di Lettere ad Ambasciatori," 1496–97. *Vide* Appendix to the Italian edition in doc. xi., the letter dated August 21st.

[2] Nevertheless the decree freeing them from the ban of outlawry is of a later date.

[3] Nardi, Cerretani, Pitti, Parenti, Guicciardini, &c.

affair twice: the first time, when, in speaking of Bernardo del Nero, he said: "His death gave me no satisfaction, I should have been well pleased had he been banished;[1] on the second occasion, he added: "That regarding those five citizens he had taken no special concern; save that he had slightly recommended Lorenzo Tornabuoni to Valori's mercy."[2] This plainly shows that the sole object of his interference was to try to moderate the general fury against the accused. Yet, no sooner had men begun to calumniate Savonarola's memory, than all declared that it was chiefly owing to him that right of appeal had been denied to the prisoners, although he himself had been the most energetic promoter of the law conferring that right. No one chose to remember that Vespucci and not Savonarola had been the proposer of that law in the form in which it was ultimately carried, or that the Friar had not only been dissatisfied with it, but caused his followers to oppose it, since his own object was to establish the right of appeal to a limited council instead of to the Consiglio Maggiore.[3] And, on the other

[1] *Vide*, in Appendix to the Italian edition, the printed version of the trial published during the fifteenth century. The reader should bear in mind that all the alterations then made in the documents were always and entirely to Savonarola's disadvantage; therefore every statement they allege in his favour may be fully relied upon.

[2] During his trial by the Papal Commissioners. *Vide* Appendix to the Italian edition.

[3] *Vide* bk. ii. chap. v. of this work. Machiavelli and Guicciardini ("Storia d'Italia") were among the first to bring these charges against Savonarola, and almost all the other writers followed their lead. Although both of these most influential historians had been acquainted with Savonarola in their youth, they only wrote about him at a much later period, and when his memory was already loaded with a thousand false accusations. Hence, they did not always steer clear of the many calumnies then afloat to the injury of the republican Friar. But even the authority of a Guicciardini and a Machiavelli cannot prevail against the truth, the which truth is clearly established by documents of indisputable weight. Moreover, even Guicciardini is most favourable to the Friar, and avoids all erroneous statements concerning him, in his "Storia d'Italia," written at a period less remote from Savonarola's day. In the

hand, the history of this period proves beyond doubt that during the trial of the conspirators, it was impossible for him to exercise any influence over the people or judges. Being under the ban of excommunication and with negotiations for its removal still pending, it would have been not only a grave blunder, but sheer madness to return to the pulpit just then, and he was never known to resort to indirect or clandestine means. As to Valori, who undoubtedly did his utmost to secure the prisoners' condemnation, it must be confessed that he seems to have been unduly influenced by jealous hatred towards his political opponent Bernardo del Nero.[1] Although a generous and loyal man, his actions invariably proceeded from impulse rather than reason; and he showed himself so incapable of self-control during the heated discussions at the trial, that it is quite improbable that he would have yielded to the authority of Savonarola who was secluded in his cloister at the other end of Florence.

second edition of his "Nuovi Documenti" (Florence, Sansoni, 1888) Signor Gherardi has added (pp. 112–124) a long extract from Parenti regarding right of appeal from the *Six Beans*. According to this authority, the Ottimati opposed this right of appeal in the first instance from fear of diminishing the power of the Council of Eight, of which they frequently formed part. The Popolani also opposed the measure, fearing that it might lessen the power of the Signory. Thereupon the Ottimati, being hostile to the Signory at the time, changed their minds and joined the advanced party, which not only favoured right of appeal, but proposed appeal to the Greater Council, a measure that naturally met with the popular approbation. Thus, as often occurs when the public mind is confused, the least cautious and most extreme measure was that which gained the day. According to the same chronicler, the general confusion was brought to a climax by the sermons of Frà Domenico da Ponzo, who, at the express command of Savonarola's foes, was daily inveighing against him from the pulpit, though no one could exactly understand the real drift of these attacks. Parenti, who had no liking for the Prior of St. Mark's, declares that the latter not only favoured but first proposed this law of appeal, without, however, asserting that Savonarola either favoured, or much less proposed, an appeal to the Greater Council, a measure that, as we have already proved by his own sermons, was carried against his will.

[1] Guicciardini alludes to this enmity in his "Storia di Firenze," p. 159.

Finally, it should be remembered that, but for the receipt of the ambassadorial despatches[1] at the very moment when all present at the Pratica were burning with indignation against the lukewarmness of the magistrates and their too evident partiality, it is probable that, even then, the accused might have succeeded in obtaining a postponement of the verdict.

Thus, many and totally unforeseen events combined to bring sentence of death on these five citizens; and it must be acknowledged that not only in the eyes of the law, but by the general opinion of the people, according to all ideas of justice at that period, they thoroughly deserved their fate. It is true that the trial was not conducted with all the usual judicial forms; but although the first irregularity was caused by the excessive timidity of the magistrates, who, after finding the accused guilty of high treason, shrank from condemning them to death, in order to give them a chance of appeal, the worst and more criminal irregularity was committed by the counsel for the defence. After having first refused to submit the case to the Greater Council, and then requested and obtained the favour of being judged by a special tribunal composed of all the principal magistrates and citizens of Florence, they had forfeited all right to demand an appeal. They had nothing to urge in favour of this demand, save their very evident motive of wishing to proceed from one irregularity to another, in order to gain time and await the election of a fresh Signory. How could the magistrates again lend themselves to these designs, or the assembly condone so great an outrage on legality? Besides, the popular verdict was most

[1] From Somenzi's letters (in Appendix to the Italian edition, doc. ii.), it is plainly evident, that even when the accused were in prison and undergoing trial, the Mediceans still entertained great hopes of being able to overthrow the popular government, with the help of the allies, and were actively labouring to that end.

decisive, and was additionally confirmed a few days after the execution, when Ridolfi's son appeared before the Greater Council to implore the remission of the decree confiscating his father's property. His demand was thrice put to the vote and thrice rejected.[1] Accordingly, neither by the laws of the State nor the votes of the Greater Council could the five prisoners have been acquitted.[2] As to Savonarola he had neither the will nor the power to influence a sentence, decreed in the heat, or rather fury, of a whirlwind, of debate.

[1] Pitti and Cerretani.

[2] It has been justly observed by Guicciardini, "Storia Fiorentina," p. 164, that in no case could they have been acquitted, that accordingly it would have been far better from the beginning to have steadily adhered to the forms prescribed by the law.

# CHAPTER IV.

*SAVONAROLA'S MINOR WORKS, BOTH PUBLISHED AND UNPUBLISHED. HIS "TRIUMPH OF THE CROSS."*

FTER the death of Bernardo del Nero and his confederates the Piagnoni became all powerful; and during the following six months three Signories of the popular party were elected in succession, whose sole difficulty in governing was that of carrying on the business of the State with an absolutely exhausted exchequer.[1] But the Pope's enmity to Savonarola became fiercer than ever, and was a continual source of affliction to the Government and people. It was not only grievous to them to witness the unjust treatment of a man who had rendered such eminent service to his country and religion, but it was also painful to be compelled in the Friar's defence, to place themselves and the Republic in an attitude of continual and growing disaccord with Rome. Nevertheless, they daily despatched pressing instructions to their orator, Alessandro Bracci, to do his utmost to obtain absolution for Savonarola. "It is our desire," wrote the Signory, "that ye should knock at every door, and shout aloud, and make every possible

[1] The Milanese orator wrote to the Duke as follows: "It may now be said, Illustrissimo Signore, that the Friar's party have the government entirely in their grasp" (*Vide* Appendix to the Italian edition, doc. ii.).

effort, and neither cease nor spare your labour until this purpose has been achieved." [1]

The Pope deigned no reply, but waited a favourable moment to fulfil his designs; while Savonarola, profiting by the truce, remained shut up in his convent, and, with an energy that was truly marvellous, devoted his whole time to the composition of new tractates and the publication of those he had already written. Passing these briefly in review, we will bestow our chief attention on his great work, "The Triumph of the Cross," which was given to the world at this time.

But, first of all, we should mention a short pamphlet, entitled "Lamentatio Sponsæ Christi." In this the author deplores the disgrace brought on the whole of the Christian flock by the clergy of his day.[2] He would also seem to

[1] Letter of the Signory, dated 7th of November, 1497. *Vide* Padre Marchese, doc. xvii. p. 163.

[2] "Lamentatio Sponsæ Christi, et Exhortatio ad fideles," Anno Domini 1497. This edition is undated, and without the author's name. It only comprises two sheets, and the pamphlet concludes at the third page and is followed by a poem in nineteen strophes, beginning thus: *Voi toccate la chiavetta*, &c. It has never been ascertained by whom these verses were written. The whole pamphlet was afterwards prohibited in Rome. Another little work must be mentioned that has been attributed to Savonarola both by Meier and Audin de Rians, but that we cannot believe to be his. It is entitled, "Loqui prohibeor et tacere non possum," and is undated. Meier saw it in MS. in the Boutourlin Library; and Audin quotes from the printed fifteenth-century edition, of which there is a copy in the Riccardi Library, that we, too, have examined. It is a pamphlet of six sheets, unsigned and undated. As regards title, style, and ideas, it differs little from Savonarola's works, although its more studied Latinity at once made us doubt that it could be from his pen. It begins as follows: "The shepherds let the lambs stray at their will, drive away those that remain in the right path, and threaten with most severe punishment those that seek the fount of pure water; hence speech is forbidden me (*loqui prohibeor*). But I see these bad shepherds shut out their flocks from the pastures, and the lean, starving lambs left a prey to wild beasts; wherefore I cannot hold my peace (*tacere non possum*). The judges and elders to whom judgment pertains sit on the seat of perdition and subvert all order. Arbitrary power replaces law, and wickedness stifles the faint utterances of the just; wherefore speech is forbidden me (*loqui prohibeor*)." Continuing in the same strain, the

have published simultaneously another pamphlet, entitled "A Treatise on the Seven Steps of the Spiritual Life of St. Buonaventura,"[1] which, as the name indicates, is merely a brief summary of the work of that ancient Father of the Church. Savonarola also addressed many printed epistles

first part of this composition concludes with these words: "*Ideo loqui cogor et exclamare compellor.*" And then, full of hope, the author exclaims: "Behold, now let every servant give praise unto his Lord. My mouth is filled, O Lord, with Thy love, and I will sing Thy glory; already the night endeth, and the dawn of a better day is at hand; our redemption is near." It goes on in this way for six or seven pages to the end. The whole pamphlet consists of six sheets.

All this might well be ascribed to Savonarola, were it not that in two or three places we find him distinctly alluded to as being already dead. Take the following instance: "Fratres et discipuli carissimi qui, ab ipso fonte uberrimo, prædulcissima eloquia, magno oblectamento, frequentius auserunt; qui tanquam exanimes et velut stupidi altiora doctrinæ mirabantur; qui virum omni quavis scientia, præclarissimum magnaque sanctitate venerandum firmissime asserebant, instanter prædicabant, omnique demonstrationum genere id animis hominum inserere nitebantur. Nunc, ac si lethæi fluminis unda demersi, in silentio trahunt dies suos et ad uniuscuiusque rei pavent occursum. Nonnulli ex eis, timore perterriti, digito labris imposito silentium indicunt, si quos noverent ilari vultu loquentes magnalia Dei. Nec desunt qui asperior obedientiæ malleo simplicium dorsum incurvent, quin et obliquis oculis intuentur quos pristinæ fidei quippiam servasse crediderint." At this point we find noted in ancient characters on the margin of the copy in the Riccardi Library (No. 123 of the fifteenth-century editions) the words: *faith in the Friar* (*fede nel Frate*); and at another point where the author names the "Martyres Dei inclytos," the same hand has written on the margin: "*the Friar and his three companions*"; an evident sign that the pamphlet was even at that time known to be the work, not of Savonarola, but one of his disciples after his death. In fact, the Riccardi copy is bound up with many other pamphlets by Savonarola and his disciples, and the volume begins with an epistle by Gio. Franc. Pico della Mirandola, "A li electi di Dio abitanti nella città di Firenze," and dated *The Day of Resurrection*, 1498. . In this epistle Pico exhorts his readers to have faith in the doctrines of Savonarola, whose prophecies are all certain to be fulfilled. Possibly, the above quoted pamphlet may also be from the pen of Pico the younger.

[1] "Trattato sopra i sette gradi della vita spirituale di San Buonaventura." An edition of this, dated 1496, is quoted in the bibliography prefixed to Burlamacchi. The greater part of these Savonarolian pamphlets were reprinted in various Venetian editions, three of which appeared in 1535, 1537, and 1538, under the title of "Molti devotissimi trattati," &c.

SAVONAROLA VISITING A CONVENT.

to the friars of St. Mark's.[1] In one, "On the Exercise of Charity," he showed how charity may be practised in all places and conditions, hence, that every true Christian should say like the philosopher of old—*omnia mea mecum porto.* In another, written in 1497, on the Eve of the Assumption, he congratulates them on their steadfastness; and treats, in a third, "On the fitting mode of offering prayer."[2] Also, being daily besieged from all sides by requests for letters, he determined to put an end to these demands by his beautiful "Epistle to the Sisters of the Third Order of St. Dominic,"[3] commonly known as *the Sisters of Annalena.* In this he said: "Continual writing is useless, if those who read take no profit by it. I have already written so much as to include every point of the Christian life; wherefore I cannot again take up my pen, for the fruitless multiplication of tracts. It may be useful in sermons to repeat the same things over and over again, inasmuch as spoken words fly and do not remain firmly impressed; whereas written words should be read again and again. The Holy Gospel was neither written on paper, nor on tables of stone; but was impressed on the hearts of the apostles and thus worked great miracles. Ye that are always craving new exhortations and new epistles, are of those that by reading much to little profit never learn anything. It was more profitable to Saint Antonio to have hearkened to the words: *Go, sell all that thou hast, give it to the poor, and follow me,* than it profits many great theologians to turn over and over the whole mass of theology. Wherefore, my beloved, there being already enough works in the Vulgate for the salvation of the whole world, we must not

[1] "Dello adoperarsi in carità."

[2] "Del discreto modo di fare orazione." This was printed in Florence in 1479; and in the above-mentioned Venetian collection: "Molti devotissimi trattati," &c.

[3] "Epistola alle suore del terzo Ordine di San Domenico ea."

needlessly swell the numbers of tractates and epistles ; but rather con those already written and put their precepts into practice." [1]

[1] Given in Florence, in the Convent of St. Mark, on the 17th day of October, 1497 ; printed in Florence without date. We will here mention some other pamphlets written by Savonarola either this year or earlier. First of all, there was the "Esposizione dei dieci Comandamenti," addressed to the Abbess of the Murate convent, and printed in Florence in 1495. It is a minute and careful guide to self-examination. His "Epistle to the Countess della Mirandola," on her intention of becoming a nun, was also printed in 1495, and then repeatedly republished. It turns on the end to be kept in view when assuming the conventual garb, and of the method of achieving this end ; and on the perfect union with Christ that the faithful should seek to attain, by causing him to live in their souls.

"The Ten Rules of Prayer in Times of Great Tribulation" were printed in 1497, together with the Epistle to the Sisters of Annalena. Of the former work, Meier quotes an edition of 1495. The rules are these : (1) To pray God to send us good shepherds ; (2) To be taught to distinguish between true prophets and false ; (3) To be made to learn that outward ceremonies are of no avail, unless they be informed by the inward spirit (of faith) ; (4) To be taught to love simplicity and despise earthly things ; (5) That God may confirm our enlightenment by the gifts of the Holy Spirit. These rules are to enable us to avoid tribulations ; the other five to strengthen us to bear tribulations when they come. They are as follows : (1) To frequently receive the sacrament ; (2) To be instant in prayer ; (3) To implore the Lord to keep the power of evil in check ; (4) To speedily make an end of it ; (5) To grant perfection to the good, and bring sinners to repentance.

"Tractate on the Mystery of the Cross." This is a representation of the cross, with a few mottoes and a brief explanation.

"Tractate on the Sacrament and Mystery of the Mass." It is only of two pages, recapitulating things already said.

"Rules for all vowed to religion, composed by Frà Jeronimo, and given by him to his brethren." (1) Poverty ; (2) Chastity ; (3) Obedience ; (4) Towards the renunciation of all vain amusements ; (5) For the avoidance of evil conversation ; (6) Continual prayer. The pamphlet ends with a picture of the ladder of life, each rung being inscribed with the above-mentioned virtues.

"Exposition of the Ave Maria, at the request of certain pious women." This is merely a literal explanation of the prayer.

"Epistle to a devout woman of Bologna." This gives a few rules for taking Communion.

"Frater Hieronymus dilectis fratribus suis." This is an inquiry why nearly all his friars should be tormented by pains in the head ; he ends by attributing them to excessive meditation and recommends moderation.

Among the crowd of Savonarola's minor works, his "Expositio in Habakkuk" must not be forgotten. It is written in Latin, and has remained not only unpublished, but without examination on account of its almost undecipherable writing. It is impossible to discover the precise date at which it was composed; but it seems to have preceded the writer's excommunication. Savonarola merely used the prophet's words as a text for a discourse on Divine justice, and the development of the same arguments so frequently enlarged upon in his sermons. "The story of the Old Testament should serve," he says, "to convince us of the necessity of the coming scourge; hence it behooves us to make ready to endure it by means of prayer, good works, and the aid of Holy Writ. The prophet Habakkuk makes lamentation to the Lord on the persecutions he had borne; and we have undertaken to expound his words, that his audacity may be a lesson to us, and increase our humility. The Lord is all-perfect; but none may inquire into His judgments, save in a spirit of deep humility; hence, even the prophet Habakkuk came to confusion through his boldness. He complains of beholding the triumph of the wicked and the oppression of the just, without perceiving that all is expressly ordained in punishment of men's sins and to call believers to repentance. It has always been the case, and we now see it repeated under our eyes in the persecutions we ourselves have to bear. But if we humble ourselves before God, we shall instantly comprehend the signification of this triumph of the wicked, and in what their felicity consists." At this point Savonarola breaks into terrible invectives against riches and worldly wealth, and also against the ecclesiastics who seek

"A Chapter held at St. Mark's on Holy Cross Day" (September 26th). In this he recommends fasting and abstinence.

"A short letter to a familiar friend." This consists of two pages only, deploring that Italy should have refused to listen to his words, and thus brought such heavy woes on her head.

after these things, and concludes by declaring that, even in the midst of tribulation, the good know far greater happiness than the wicked in the midst of their triumph; that accordingly they should give thanks to the Lord who draws them nearer to Him by the scourge. Although there is nothing very original in this little work, it deserves special mention, not only because it is still unpublished, but also as an example of the brief tractates in Savonarola's hand inscribed at the beginning and end of his annotated Bible in the National Library, of which I have already spoken, and which no one, save myself, has hitherto examined.[1]

But at last the moment has come to speak of "The Triumph of the Cross." Savonarola gives in this book, with great analytical power and by a scientific process that was entirely new at the period, a complete exposition of the Catholic faith, stripped of the scholasticism that had hitherto been essential to every theological work. In his desire to bring the subject as much as possible within the comprehension of the people, this monk of the fifteenth century had the glory of inaugurating the noble school afterwards made illustrious by the names of Bossuet and Leibnitz,[2] and that subsequently fell into decay. For at a later day the scholastic method once more prevailed, and in our

[1] The autograph of this "Expositio" is among the notes and addenda in the Bible preserved in the National Library. An old copy of it is to be found in the Marcian Library at Venice, Cod. xli. chap. ix. of the Latin MSS. We would call attention to certain words at Sheet 50 of the Marcian MS.: "Non cogitant nisi præsentia, de futuris malis aut non habent fidem firmam, *aut, tanquam præsumptuosi, putant misericordiam Dei tam magnam, ut SINE OPERIBUS salvet homines.*" The idea is throughout opposed to that constituting the foundation of Luther's doctrines. As regards the other autograph and unedited writings contained in the same Bible, see bk. i. chap. vii. of this work.

[2] We here allude to the method employed by both these authors, and also to their purpose of re-constituting the unity of the Church, but not to their theological doctrines, inasmuch as the one was Catholic and the other Protestant.

country theological science remained the exclusive possession of the clergy. Then, the simpler, more scientific, and popular method introduced by the Friar four centuries before, was entirely put aside, to the serious injury, not only of religious feeling and theological inquiry, but likewise of every branch of our national culture.

The object proposed by Savonarola in his "Triumph of the Cross" was to investigate and expound the truths of religion by means of natural reason: "Not that faith, the spontaneous gift of God, can be acquired through reason, but because reason is a useful weapon with which to combat unbelievers or open to them the way of salvation; to arouse the lukewarm and give strength to the faithful." "We will accordingly rely upon no authority, and proceed as though we could have no belief in any man in the world, whatever his wisdom, but solely in natural reason."[1] This language from the lips of a friar, and in the fifteenth century—an age when, with regard to religion and theology, men's minds were divided between total indifference and blind submission to authority—must, as we have already noted, be held as a sign of the highest courage and originality. What is still more remarkable, is that Savonarola remained unfailingly true to his flag and conducted the whole work on the same principle. "Reason," he tells us, "proceeds from the seen to the unseen; inasmuch as all our knowledge is derived from the

[1] Proem. "The Triumph of the Cross" went through numerous editions, both in the fifteenth century and at later periods. Savonarola first published it in Latin, and then speedily produced an Italian translation, or rather paraphrase, for the use of *the universality of the faithful.* We have preferred to follow the Italian edition, as being far simpler and easier in style: the scholastic formulæ occasionally used in the Latin addition are laid aside in the Italian version in order to make the work better adapted to the popular mind. "De veritate fidei in dominicæ Crucis triumphum," undated; "Libro di Frate Hieronymo da Ferrara dello ordine dei Frati predicatori; della verità della Fede Christiana; sopra el Glorioso Triompho della Croce di Christo," with a preface by Domenico Benivieni. This edition also was undated.

senses, which are only cognizant of outer things; intellect, on the contrary, pierces to the substance of things, and from the knowledge of matter rises to the knowledge of the unseen and of God. Now, even as the philosophers seek God in the marvellous and visible works of nature, so we seek and find in the visible Church the invisible Church, and her supreme head, Jesus Christ."

"The philosophers made a tabulated arrangement of all created works and beings, the better to study them as a whole and appreciate their Divine origin. In the same way, we would gather up all the visible works of Christ and His Church into a single image; so that the splendour of their divinity might be more easily apparent." This image is the same scene so often described by Savonarola in his sermons. There is a mystic chariot traversing the world in triumph. It bears Christ the conqueror, crowned with thorns, with bleeding wounds, and illumined by a celestial light from on high. His right hand grasps the Old and New Testaments, His left the Cross and the other emblems of the Passion; at His feet lie the chalice, the Host, and all the sacramental symbols; the Virgin Mary is seated beside Him, and near her stand the urns containing the ashes of martyrs. The car is drawn by the apostles, preachers, and prophets, and followed by the multitude of the faithful and the martyrs; while behind these, are infidels, unbelievers, and enemies of Christ, with their idols shattered, their books burnt, and their altars overthrown. Thus the car of Christ passes through the world, ever victorious, and crushing every obstacle in its path.[1] "This car," said Savonarola, "shall be as a new world, and shall endow us with a new philosophy. But as in every science it is requisite to take certain first principles as a basis from which to start, so we, too, must admit as indisputable, certain facts, from which to proceed: Thus,

[1] Bk. i. chap. ii.

for instance, that Christ was crucified, was worshipped, and hath converted the world; that Christians worship the Virgin, the Holy Trinity, the martyrs, and so on. These are facts that none of sound mind can deny; and if some Pagan writers left them unmentioned, the conversion of thousands of the heathen has served to confirm their truth."[1]

Here the author at last enters on his main theme, and brings forward entirely rational arguments in discussing the existence and attributes of God. He considers God as the prime mover and primal cause, and then going through all the well-known arguments of the school, dwells more particularly on the following: "No natural inclination is false; therefore, since the whole human race has a natural faith and belief in the existence of a God, we are forced to infer that He truly exists, otherwise we should have to declare that one of our natural inclinations is false, the which is opposed to universal experience. In inanimate things in the animal world, and above all in mankind, we find that nothing in nature is purposeless, but that all is ordained to some end." He then treats of the Divine attributes, saying that God is incorporate and without corporeal form or any compound substance; but is one, immutable and eternal, is supreme goodness and infinite power. He then declares that the true end of man is the contemplation of things Divine, the which is only to be attained in the future life; wherefore it follows that if the soul were not immortal, man could never fulfil his true destiny.[2]

The second book of "The Triumph of the Cross" treats of those things which are beyond the grasp of reason, and yet only to be known by its aid, and by admitting, or assuming as the point of departure, the necessary and supernatural works of Christ and His

[1] Bk. i. chaps. iii. and iv.
[2] Bk. i. from chap. v. to chap. xiv.

Church. "By reason alone we may attain to the knowledge of God's existence; but never to that of the Trinity, save by first assuming the truth of its marvellous and supernatural operations. The knowledge of the existence of God appertains more peculiarly to the philosopher; but the knowledge of the existence of the Trinity is the main object of this work, in which, by the aid of reason, we would endeavour to soar beyond the supernatural and visible operations of the Church, to the Church invisible and to Christ Himself.[1] First of all we would say that, even as the existence of God is confirmed by the faith naturally felt in it by all men, so the existence of a true religion may be equally taken for granted; inasmuch as every man has a natural tendency to worship and do homage to his God."[2]

These propositions laid down, Savonarola continues: In every religion there are two forms of worship—the outward and the inward; and of these the latter is infinitely the nobler of the two, for it is manifested by righteousness of living, which is the grandest homage and truest worship that the creature can render to his Creator.[3] Wherefore we proclaim that of all religions the only true one is that which teaches us to lead a better life. And what religion can rival the Christian faith by which we are led to forsake all that is of this world, to seek after spiritual things; and that leads us to the contemplation of God Himself, the only end that can satisfy both our heart and our intellect, and the which, the more it comprehends, the greater becomes its power of comprehension? In fact, no finite thing can satisfy its infinite desire; it finds no rest, save in God alone. But since God is infinite, and intellect finite, it is needful to have grace, the which, by means of virtuous living, will lead us to true bliss."[4]

[1] Proem to bk. ii. *Vide* also bk. i. chap. v. [2] Bk. ii. chap. i.
[3] Bk. ii. chap. ii. [4] Bk. ii. chap. iii. to chap. vii.

"Likewise, were other proofs required in favour of the Christian religion, an infinite number might be found. The Scriptures, and more particularly the prophecies, the greater part of which have already been fulfilled, would suffice to convert the most incredulous.[1] We have all seen the marvellous and supernatural effects wrought on the spirit and life of the faithful who habitually take the Sacrament; we have all seen how their inward joy and peace of mind are reflected in the light of their countenances." He then gives minute details of this spiritual beauty and inward tranquillity of mind, and extols its nobleness and influence. "The mere sight of Pope Leo sufficed to curb Attila, the king of the Huns; and that of St. Benedict brought Totila to repentance. There is nothing more imposing than the aspect of a good and true Christian; nothing more sublime than his inward peace: it was thus that the martyrs were enabled to meet death joyfully in the midst of their torments."[2]

After showing the necessity of a true religion, and that Christianity is the only true one, he proceeds to examine the works of its Founder. What could Jesus Christ have been, if not the true God? How otherwise could He have overthrown all other religions and all idols, made men believe Him to be One with God; believe in the Eucharist and in the Virgin Mother—in what fame would these things be held, had they been achieved by fraud? Would it have been possible to convert almost the whole world to belief in a lie; to overturn the Empire; to give Rome into the hands of a fisherman; and to achieve all this in despite of the priests of the old faith, despite the potency of the Empire and the combined forces of nearly all the world, without weapons, without gold, without even the aid of natural reason? For how may the force of reason avail against things beyond the reach of reason?

[1] Bk. ii. chap. viii. [2] Bk. ii. chap. viii. to chap. xii.

The philosophers, with their endless array of logical arguments, only succeeded in creating schools with a limited number of followers; and hardly one was able to bring his precepts to bear on the realities of life. Christianity, on the contrary, spread throughout the earth, and by inculcating a doctrine intangible to reason, and holding out a reward beyond the reach of imagination, converted the world, not only to belief, but to action. No one can contemplate this work without singing a song of praise to the Lord; and without acknowledging that, by it, man has been raised to God, that Christ is our ultimate end, and that only through Him can we attain salvation.[1]

The third book is devoted to minuter details, dealing with the articles of faith, the precepts of morality, the laws and ceremonies of the Church. "But these things," says Savonarola, "have been already expounded by many Doctors; we therefore need only gather them together. And, first of all, we would note, that there is no cause for marvel, if certain dogmas of religion transcend the bounds of human reason. Is it not often seen that no man can penetrate the thoughts of another? Need we, then, wonder if the creature cannot rise to the height of the Creator?" And with this he proceeds to enumerate the articles of our faith.

This part of the work may be passed over, for it is only a repetition of what is to be found in all Savonarola's tractates; nevertheless even this plain exposition serves to reveal his originality of mind. In speaking of the Trinity, for instance, he observes that although the unity of the three persons be a mystery, we may nevertheless find it mirrored to some degree in all nature, and that as we mount the various steps in the scale of creation, we find the symbol of the Trinity increase in perfection. In the vegetable kingdom, for example, we find the fruit of

[1] Bk. ii. chap. xv.

the tree only connected externally with the parent stem; while in the animal kingdom we see that the progeny lies many months in the mother's womb; and if we ascend to the generation of thought, we shall find that it is yet more intrinsic to the mind that has given it birth, almost indeed inseparable from it. Here, then, we may say, is a true image of the Trinity: there is the mind that thinks, the conception it has generated, and the love that conception inspires in it: truly these are even as the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost. But even this is too faint an image. When man rises to the contemplation of God, then the image is far more perfect, for the mind becomes rapt and merged in the object of its contemplation. Nevertheless we are always clogged by the senses; wherefore we cannot, while here below, soar to the height that is only to be reached in the sphere above. There, contemplation will be made perfect, and merged, as it were, in God, and the image of the Trinity will clearly shine forth in ourselves. And if man may soar to so great a height, how of the Lord Himself? In Him the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost are truly blended into one; His substance, His being is triune and one at the same time. Thus the Trinity becomes, as it were, the universal law of nature, which, by that law, tends irresistibly towards God; and the nearer it draws unto Him, the better does it represent the image of the Holy Trinity. We should therefore be convinced that, if we fail to fully comprehend this mystery, it is only because it is beyond, but not in opposition to reason." [1]

The author then goes on to say that "the same ideas point out the way to a better understanding and exposition of the mystery of the Incarnation. The Lord was made man, not that He should be abased, but the creature raised; for although finite, the creature may hope to be

[1] Bk. iii. chap. iii.

raised to infinite bliss, precisely because the mystery of the Incarnation has been vouchsafed almost as a sure pledge and example. In those days men were inflamed and almost intoxicated with joy; they forsook the things of this world; became conversant with celestial things, and defied death in their cause."[1] Then, discoursing on original sin, he declares that man should not complain of bearing the penalty of Adam's guilt, inasmuch as justice was a free gift, granted to us in our first father, and lost to us through him.[2]

Descending still more to the concrete, he then discusses the institutions and canons of the Church, remarking that: "Even as there is an immutable law of nature among men, from which are derived all the so-called positive laws, peculiar to every people, and changing according to time and place; so there is likewise a Divine law, or rather an eternal moral law, in which, only by grace, can we fully share, and bearing not only on the actions, but on the thoughts and even on the most intimate and secret aspirations of our hearts. This is the only source from which the special laws of the Church are derived, and upon which all her canons and constitutions should be founded, even as positive must be founded upon natural right. These two primary rights of our nature, namely, moral and natural right, are reciprocally related to each other; but the first alone is a complete and universal law bearing on the whole life of man; the second bears on external actions only, for it cannot penetrate to the inner spirits wherein is the true seat of good and evil. Hence natural laws might be considered as a lesser part of the moral law, with which it neither may nor can be brought into opposition. "For the which reason we despise no good works nor rational laws, albeit they proceed from the people, from philosophers,

[1] Bk. iii. chap. vii. [2] Bk. iii. chap. ix.

or from Pagan emperors, but glean everything that is good and true from all doctrines and all books, assured that all truth and goodness proceed from God, and are especially created for the use of His elect." [1]

Savonarola concludes by speaking of the Sacraments, styling them the secondary causes of spiritual salvation, of which Jesus Christ is the primary cause. The Sacraments, he says, may be truly regarded as the instruments used by the Lord for the bestowal and increase of His grace; as visible signs marvellously representing the invisible object for which they are decreed. It is needless to give any detailed explanation of his doctrine of the Sacraments, as it is in complete accordance with that of the Doctors of the Church; and it would be equally superfluous to repeat his minute description of the Sacraments, and the strange allegories they suggest to his mind. He considers them to be all complementary, as it were, to the sacrament of the Eucharist, and forming in their entirety a marvellous world of spiritual harmony and loveliness.[2]

Thus, after having proved the existence of God, and the necessity of a religion, and shown the excellence of the Christian faith in its every part, Savonarola devotes the fourth and concluding book to confuting all other doctrines and creeds, and proving their fallacy when compared with the Christian faith. He begins with the philosophers, and exposes the strange variety of their opinions upon all the more important problems of life, showing how it naturally follows that whoever forsakes religion, instantly falls into a bottomless and measureless abyss, from which there is no escape.[3] Continuing in this strain, he next assails judicial astrology, against which

[1] Bk. iii. chap. xiii.
[2] Bk. iii. chaps. xiv. to xvi. *Vide* also bk. i. chap. x.
[3] Bk. iv., Proem, chaps. i. and ii.

he had, as we know, already produced a short tractate; combats various idolatrous sects, and confutes the Jewish faith on the evidence of the Bible. He then attacks heretics or schismatics, and deals his heaviest blows at the Mahometans.[1] And this gives him an opportunity for a concluding definition and defence of the Church militant. "This Church is one, under one head, in the likeness and as the image of the Church triumphant in heaven under the rule of Jesus Christ." At this point Savonarola quotes all the passages of Scripture in which the unity of the Church and the authority of the Pope are most plainly inculcated. According to St. John there must be only one fold and one shepherd; yet although Christ in heaven is the true and sole Head of the Church, He hath left St. Peter as His representative upon earth, saying: "Thou art Peter, and upon this rock (*pietra*) I will build My Church, and I will give unto thee the keys of heaven; and whatsoever thou shalt bind on earth shall be bound in heaven, and whatsoever thou shalt loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven." Nor can these words apply to Peter alone, for inasmuch as God hath promised that the Church shall endure to the end of the world, so they must be held to apply to Peter and the successors of Peter. Wherefore it is manifest that all the faithful should be united under the Pope, as the supreme head of the Roman Church, the mother of all other churches; *and that whoever departs from the unity and doctrines of the Roman Church, unquestionably departs from Christ.*"[2]

So ended a work that, while written as an exposition and defence of Catholicism, also served as an ample and noble apology for its author. Not even Pope Alexander

[1] Bk. iv. chaps. iv. and v.

[2] Bk. iv. chap. vi. We have here quoted nearly verbatim from the author's text, but his words are still more prolix, and accordingly even still more explicit.

himself could have exacted a more explicit profession of faith, or a more absolute submission to Papal authority. In fact, Savonarola's attacks were never directed in the slightest degree against the dogmas of the Roman Church, but solely against those who corrupted them. He had an enthusiastic respect and reverence for religion; but fiercely combated the papal and clerical abominations by which its safety was imperilled, and steadily refused to bend to threats or oppression. Numerous editions of "The Triumph of the Cross" appeared both in Italian and Latin, and it was even reprinted by the Office of the Propaganda Fide,[1] whose publications are intended for missionary use; while by expert theologians it has always been estimated as one of the best of religious tractates as regards its matter, and of the most original in its manner of exposition,[2] it can scarcely, however, be said to give a complete idea of Savonarola's mind, since he always rose to his greatest height in the heat of combat, and only showed in the pulpit the full extent of his powers. Nevertheless, the finer qualities of his intellect are all displayed in this work, and we are enabled to appreciate the extent of his learning, embracing nearly the whole philosophic and religious knowledge of his time; for in this work scholastic and mystic theology, Aristotelian and Neo-Platonic philosophy are all handled with equal mastery, and without any of the extravagances by which they were afterwards debased.

During the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, in fact, these elements of knowledge were disunited; and each becoming dominant in its turn easily transgressed its due limits. Thus, the Aristotelians inclined to materialism; the Platonists to pantheism and frequent flights into the

[1] It was printed without any date, and together with his "Meditazione sul Miserere." There is one copy of it in the Guicciardini Collection.

[2] It was highly praised even by Père Lacordaire.

wildest and most arbitrary allegories; while the mystics paved the way for the Reformation, by breaking up the religious unity, that it was the supreme desire of Savonarola to maintain. In his writings all these diverse creeds were fused in one synthesis and show the need felt in that age for a general transformation of thought. The Friar's early training in Aristotelian philosophy aided him to expound theology; and the Neo-Platonic doctrines gave a certain scientific basis to the mystic beliefs which were so satisfactory to his ardent soul. These stores of learning fed the fiery zeal of a religious spirit, whose days were spent in the contemplation of heavenly things and in fervent admiration of the Holy Fathers and Holy Writ. He sought a faith in accord with reason, a religion in accord with liberty; a Church that should never be hostile to the nation, nor opposed to the voice of conscience and virtue, the true keystones, as he deemed, of the Church and the State. These various and manifold doctrines gave wings to his free and original mind, that instinctively flew towards the truth, and, ever soaring to lofty planes of thought, unconsciously expressed the general needs of the political, philosophic, and religious life of an entire epoch. The component elements of this almost superhuman inspiration and universal grasp of thought were afterwards scattered, and the progress of mankind could only be carried on in separate grooves. Therefore any one who, dominated by exclusive or preconceived ideas, and consequently incapable of fully appreciating Savonarola's mind and spirit, should consider only one side of his character, would gain a very incomplete notion of the nature of his ideas or value of his deeds, and would limit to a short period the influence of the man who agitated and stirred an entire century, by acting as the representative of all its loftiest and most noble aspirations.

# CHAPTER V.

*SAVONAROLA RESUMES HIS SERMONS ON SEPTUAGESIMA SUNDAY. A SECOND "BURNING OF THE VANITIES." MORE PAPAL BRIEFS. CONTINUATION OF HIS SERMONS.*

(1497–1498.)

THE year 1497 was now coming to a close, and the Republic much wearied by the slow progress of its negotiations with the Pope. A second ambassador, Messer Domenico Bonsi, was sent to Rome to assist Bracci in pleading Savonarola's cause, seek permission to impose a tithe on ecclesiastical property, and try to obtain the fulfilment of the Pope's promise of restoring Pisa to the Florentines. But all was in vain. The Holy Father refused to settle any other question until that of the Friar was decided; but he now insisted that Savonarola should be delivered into his hands, and to this the Republic was neither able nor willing to accede. If the magistrates were weary of all this empty manœuvring, Savonarola was still wearier and more impatient of it, and his long silence was now becoming unbearable to him. For more than six months he had remained shut up in his cell, solely occupied in expounding his doctrines by the pen, and defending them against attacks from all quarters. He had proved the excommunication to be invalid, shown that a sound Catholic could withstand the unjust commands of an ill-

informed and corrupt Pope, and had finally, in his "Triumph of the Cross," built up an enduring memorial of his innocence and fame. It was no longer possible for any to believe that one who had so explicitly recognized the authority of the Papal keys, and merely protested against the indecent and scandalous uses to which they were turned by wicked men, had the slightest intention of raising a schism in the Church.

The quarrel with Rome was now very widely discussed. Numerous publications appeared in defence of Savonarola's orthodoxy, and even more to declare the excommunication invalid. Most of these pamphlets were mere repetitions of things already said by Savonarola himself in his different sermons and epistles. But G. F. Pico della Mirandola brought out an "Apology," dedicated to Duke Ercole of Este, in which he treated the question, if not with any striking originality, at all events with much learning, and after careful study of the Fathers and papal decrees in general.[1] He begins by proclaiming his con-

[1] "Apologia R. P. F. Hieronymi Savonarolæ," per G. F. Picum de Mirandula Comitem ad Herculem Estensem I. Ferrarriæ et Mutinæ Ducem. Libri duo. This is the first of Quétif's "Additiones" to Pico's Life of Savonarola. Paris, 1674.

In the Proem, addressed to Ercole I., Pico states that he wrote the work in consequence of a conversation he had held with the Duke, and almost in fulfilment of a promise made at that time. But the Duke, notwithstanding the warm admiration he had hitherto shown for Savonarola, and the great encouragement he had afforded him, now took alarm, and tried to deprecate the wrath of the Pope by sending him a letter dated the 26th of March, 1498, that does little honour to the writer. For he absolutely denies having spoken to Pico on the matter, or made any request of him. On the contrary, he shows great imdignation against the author of the "Apologia," and charges him with falsehood (*in hoc aut finxisse aut mentitum esse*), and professes his submission to the Papal authority, of which, he declares, he has never had any doubt (*cum de Summi Pontificis auctoritate ac potestate nunquam dubitaverim*). Cappelli, Girolamo Savonarola ec, doc. cxlvi. p. 104. The Duke's conduct resembles that of many other of the Friar's adherents, and is an additional proof that no genuine religious movement was possible in Italy at a time when there was an almost total absence of any earnest religious spirit.

stant and entire submission to the dogmas of the Church. For the Church, he says, is under the care of Jesus Christ, and hence can neither be in error as regards the substance of faith, nor in all needful rules for the godly life by which we attain to salvation.[1] On other points, however, the Church is not infallible. And if this may be said of the universal Church, how much more may not be affirmed of Popes and of Councils, who, according to the Doctors and Fathers, have frequently lapsed into error? No sentence of excommunication that has been justly appealed against, or that contains manifest errors of fact, and particularly if based on such errors, can be held valid or worthy of obedience. The apostle enjoins obedience to our superiors; but he also adds that we must render obedience to God rather than to men. (Romans xiii. 1; Acts v. 29). For our superiors may be urged by their own malice or by false suggestions from others.[2] We are bound, it is true, to submit even to an unjust sentence, but only in cases where refusal to obey might give birth to scandal. And when excommunication commands things contrary to faith and morality, no one will consider that we are bound to submission. Undoubtedly, no true shepherd would ever issue any such command; but there might be a wolf in the guise of a shepherd. Excommunication derives its force from justice, and without justice can take no effect.[3] Wherefore, according to the Doctors, many excommunications have been invalid.

Pico then proceeds to say that false doctrine is one of the charges brought against Savonarola in the Papal

[1] " . . . . de fidei substantia et moribus ad salutem consequendam necessariis" (at page 8).

[2] " . . . . vel malitia propria, vel falsis suggestionibus moti" (at page 22).

[3] "Porro excommunicationis sententia vires ex iustitia sumit, qua destituta, languet et moritur" (at page 25).

decree ; but that this charge could only have been alleged through enmity or error,[1] since it is known to all that Savonarola only teaches the word of Christ.[2] The Pope was moved to this by perfidious men in their wrath against one who was innocent; and he gave them credence without first putting their statements to the test. Wherefore his sentence can have no force, inasmuch as it ordains impossible and injurious things. The union of St. Mark's with the new Congregation does not depend in fact on Savonarola's consent alone, but on that of all his brethren, against whom no excommunication has been launched. This union would be no reformation, but rather a malformation, since the good would be forcibly joined to the corrupt. Hence it is plain that Savonarola has no need of absolution, and that none need refrain from intercourse with him.[3] And this can be proved by the logic of reason, since it is needless to loosen that which is unbound. Rather should all men be convinced that the sentence of excommunication affords the best proof of his innocence.[4]

[1] " . . . malo zelo et ignoratione caussæ " (at page 31).

[2] " . . . . nihil docet præter Christi verba " (at page 32).

[3] " . . . nullum ei necessarium absolutionem fore, nec ab illius communione ullo pacto abstinendum esse " (at page 38).

[4] " Hi profecto in propriæ conscientiæ luce viderunt, nullo eum spirituali laqueo irretitum, quod . . . ex ipsa etiam causa, ob quam excommunicatio est publicata, plane confirmatum est " (at page 40).

Professor Ranke dwells upon Pico's " Apologia " in his before-quoted work on Savonarola (pp. 289–291), and declares it to be of great value as a clear definition of the attitude of Savonarola and his disciples towards the Pope. That he resumed his sermons after the sentence of excommunication, and that he was allowed so to do, are, he says, very important facts. It was not only an act of disobedience, but one hostile to the whole system of the Church, and calculated to throw doubt upon it. To draw a distinction between the universal Church and the papal power was contrary to the recognized practice of the time, was a step towards transforming the constitution of the Church itself. Such, continues Ranke, was the position assumed by Savonarola, who thus paved the way for Reform. " Der Excommunication zu widerstehen war eine Anbahnung des allgemeine Reform mit der er umging " (p. 291). That

In fact, as we have already seen, even the Pope shrank from impugning the orthodoxy of Savonarola's doctrine, and the cardinals, after careful examination, pronounced it to be without a flaw. But what availed all these discussions? It was more and more evident that the Borgia's feud with the Friar was of a political and personal character, was becoming more and more scandalous, leading to a daily increase of immorality in Florence, and endangering the safety of the Republic. Reason and discussion had absolutely failed, and farther delay would be dangerous.

Accordingly on Christmas Day Savonarola put an end to all suspense by thrice performing high mass, and giving the communion to all his monks and to a vast concourse of laity. He then led his brethren in solemn procession round the square of St. Mark. In the meantime many of his friends who, by permission of the Signory, had already furnished the Duomo with the usual platforms and benches, came to implore him to preach to them again. Little persuasion was needed, and he promised to remount the pulpit on the following Sunday (Septuagesima, 11th of February, 1498). This was opposed by Messer Lionardo de' Medici, vicar to the archbishop, who not only sternly prohibited every ecclesiastic from attending the sermon, but ordered the parish priests to impress their flocks with the importance and validity of the excommunication, and

Savonarola desired a real reformation of the Church is as certain as that he combated Alexander VI. and even sought to procure his deposition. But it is no less certain that he left dogma unassailed, and always recognized the authority of the Pontiff to be indispensable to the unity of the Church; and these declarations are likewise repeated by Pico. This constituted the difference between the reformation Savonarola sought to promote and that founded by Luther. Besides, as Ranke himself allows, the character and deeds of the German Reformer were altogether different from those of the Prior of St. Mark's. Nor can we believe that it was then an unheard-of thing to distinguish between the Church universal and the Papal power, although the Popes naturally tried to stamp out the idea.

threaten them with exclusion from the confessional, the Lord's Table, and even from burial in consecrated ground, as the penalty of hearing Savonarola preach. But the Signory soon put a stop to this by intimating to the vicar that if he continued these menaces he would be proclaimed a rebel.[1] All hindrances being thus removed, the first sermon was given on the appointed day, and, thanks to the novelty of the case and the Friar's daring, the cathedral was even more crowded than usual.

The excommunication, the authority of the Pope, and the right of every honest conscience to resist unjust commands, were naturally the chief themes of these new discourses. "O Lord, Thou hast cast me into a flood from which I have neither the power nor the will to escape. But I beseech Thee to let no word pass my lips that may be opposed to the Holy Scriptures or to the Church. Let us now consider the decree of excommunication. Know then that God ruleth the world through secondary causes, and the righteous prince or the good priest is merely an instrument in the Lord's hands for the government of the people. But when the Higher Agency is withdrawn from prince or priest he is no longer an instrument, but *a broken tool.* And how, thou wouldst say, am I to discern whether or no the Higher Agency be absent? See if his laws and commands be contrary to that which is the root and principle of all wisdom, namely of godly living and charity; and if contrary, thou mayest be truly assured that he is *a broken tool*, and that thou art nowise bound to obey him. Now tell me a little, what is the aim of those who by their lying reports have procured this sentence of ex-

[1] Nardi, vol. i. p. 136, actually says that the Signory ordered him to resign his post at two hours' notice, and we find this repeated in two letters addressed to Duke Ludovico, one of which is dated from Florence, 13th of February, 1498; and the other from Rome, 21st of February, 1498. *Vide* Appendix to Italian Edition, doc. xii. But there is reason to believe that this was only a threat.

communication? As all know, they sought to sweep away virtuous living and righteous government, and to open the door to every vice. Thus, no sooner was the excommunication pronounced, than they returned to drunkenness, profligacy, and every other crime, and righteous living has been struck down. Wherefore I tell thee that, if I be accursed on earth, I am blessed in heaven.

"Man's perfection consisteth not only in faith and in law, but in charity, and only he that hath charity knoweth that which is needed for salvation.[1] Nowadays we have nothing but laws and canons and controversies; but the apostles had fewer laws, because they were inflamed with love and charity. All theology, all canonical and civil laws, all ecclesiastical ceremonies are ordained with a view to charity, and all the world hath been made for charity by God. Therefore on him that giveth commands opposed to charity, which is the plenitude of our law, *anathema sit.* Were such command pronounced by an angel, even by the Virgin Mary herself, and all the saints (the which is certainly impossible), *anathema sit.* If pronounced by any law, or canon, or council, *anathema sit.* And if any Pope hath ever spoken to a contrary effect from this, let him be declared excommunicate. I say not that such Pope hath ever existed; but if he hath existed he can have been no instrument of the Lord, but *a broken tool.*

"It is feared by some that, although this excommunication be powerless in Heaven, it may have power in the Church. For me it is enough not to be interdicted by Christ. O my Lord, if I should seek to be absolved from this excommunication, let me be sent to hell; I should shrink from seeking absolution as from mortal sin. O Father, there be even some friars who speak of this

[1] It should be noted how, in placing charity above faith and law, Savonarola is in contradiction with the fundamental doctrine of the Reformation: *justification by faith alone.*

excommunication, saying that it is valid, and that none may absolve us from it. Would ye that I teach ye the way? Ah! it were better to keep silence. Nevertheless this much will I say: do thus." And here Savonarola struck two keys together to signify by their chinking that the clergy of his time were ready to do anything for money. "O Father!" he then went on, "Thou didst bid us to let the excommunication come, to bear it aloft at the spear's point, and that Thou wouldst open the way for us.[1] I reply that all hath not yet come to pass, wherefore thou hast not yet seen all things. But thou hast seen how some one in Rome lost a son,[2] how a certain man hath come to his death here, and will certainly be cast into hell, and ye will see how they will be judged.[3] As yet no miracle hath been forced from me; but when the time cometh the Lord will stretch forth His hand; and already so many signs have been shown to thee, that there is no longer any need of miracles.[4] What could be more miraculous than the spread of these doctrines, despite so many obstacles? Citizens, women, ye must risk your lives for this truth. I turn to Thee, O Lord, that didst suffer death for the truth, and I beseech Thee to let me only die in its defence, for the salvation of Thy chosen servants and of this people."[5]

[1] Here allusion is made to another sermon from which I have already quoted, and in which Savonarola gave his hearers to understand that if he were sentenced to excommunication he would *give a turn to the key*. But, as we have seen, no real bull of excommunication had ever been launched, nor did the circular letter to the different monastic orders in Florence bring any definite charge against Savonarola's doctrines.

[2] The assassination of the Duke of Gandia, the son of Alexander VI.

[3] This is perhaps an allusion to the death of Bernardo del Nero and his accomplices, of whose guilt Savonarola was undoubtedly convinced, although he did nothing to procure their condemnation.

[4] Savonarola did not intend to say that he would perform a real miracle, but believed that, were it essential for the salvation of the Church, the Lord would perform through him some supernatural deed for its sake, and of this he was apparently fully convinced.

[5] "Prediche xxii., sopra l' Esodo e sopra alcuni Salmi," delivered in Sta.

On the 15th of the same month the Friar gave a lecture in St. Mark's on the office and attributes of the priesthood, in which he denounced the vices of the clergy with terrific force. "When I reflect on the life led by priests I am constrained to weep. O my brethren and my children, shed tears for these woes of the Church, so that the Lord may call the priests to repentance, for it is plain that terrible chastisement awaits them. The tonsure is the seat of all iniquity. It begins in Rome, where the clergy make mock of Christ and the saints; are worse than Turks, worse than Moors. Not only do they refuse to suffer for the Lord's sake, but even traffic with the sacraments. At this day there is a trade in benefices, which are sold to the highest bidder! Think ye that Jesus Christ will any longer permit this? Woe, woe to Italy and to Rome! Come, come, O priests! come, my brethren; let us do our best to revive a little the love of God! O Father, we shall be cast into prison, we shall be persecuted and done to death. So let it be! They may kill me as they please, but they will never tear Christ from my heart. I am ready to die for my God.

"Thou hast been in Rome, and dost know the life of these priests. Tell me, wouldst thou hold them to be pillars of the Church, or temporal lords? Have they not courtiers and grooms, and horses and dogs; are not their mansions full of tapestries and silks, of perfumes and lackeys? Seemeth it to thee that this is the Church of God? Their vainglory filleth the world, and their avarice is equally vast. They do all things for gold, and they ring their bells because of their greed, and only demand bread and candles and coin. They attend Vespers and Offices in the choir, forasmuch at these services there is

Maria del Fiore (the Duomo), and beginning on Septuagesima Sunday, the 11th of February, 1498; collected by M. Lorenzo Violi. Florence, 1498. *Vide* Sermon No. i.

somewhat to be gained; but they go not to Matins, for there no money is distributed. They sell benefices, sell the sacraments, sell marriage services, sell all things. And yet they stand in dread of excommunication! They will not give the holy wafer to those who attend my sermons; and they forget that they have accompanied the dead together with my friars of St. Mark's. Whenever there is profit to be made they disregard my excommunication, but when it suits their purpose they declare it to be valid. O Lord, Lord, smite them with Thy glaive!" [1]

Savonarola gave two more sermons before the close of the Carnival. In the second, delivered on Sexagesima Sunday (18th of February), he spoke of the Pope and the papal authority in the following words: "I take it for granted there be no man who is not liable to error. Thou art mad to say that a Pope cannot err, when there have been so many wicked Popes who have erred! . . . If it were true that no Pope could ever err, ought we then to do even as they do in order to gain salvation? Thou wouldst reply, that a Pope may err as a man, but not as a Pope; but I tell thee that the Pope may err, even in his judgments and sentences.[2] Go! read how many decrees have been made by one Pope and revoked by the next; and how many opinions held by some Popes are contradicted by those of other Pontiffs." He then went on to declare that the errors of a Pope may proceed from ill-will, or be based upon false information; and thereupon he gave the history of all the briefs launched against himself, and their contradictory tenour. But as all this has been minutely narrated elsewhere, there is no need to repeat it.

[1] "Sermone fatto a molti sacerdoti, religiosi e secolari in San Marco, a di' 15 Febbraio, 1497" (Florentine style). It is also to be found in the collection of "Sermons on Exodus." ("Sermoni sopra Esodo.")

[2] It should be noted that this does not refer to dogma.

"But why do they rage against me in Rome? Thinkest thou 'tis for the sake of religion? By no means. They seek to overthrow our government, they seek to tyrannize over us, and care not if righteous living be destroyed, the which is born of our doctrine, and will die with it. Wherefore he that combateth this doctrine combateth evangelic charity, and is truly a heretic. But nowadays the preachers are hirelings of great potentates, and are sorely afraid to speak the truth, or oppose those that are above them. It was not thus in the times when priests were inspired by the true Christian spirit; in those days St. Paul reproved St. Peter before all, *quia reprehensibilis erat*."

"These, then, are the reasons which have prevented me from writing to Rome to say that I had erred. And to ye, who always quote canons and chapters, I make reply that there be many that allege these things without knowing what they want. These canons of yours, ye turn them and twist them after your own fashion; make this lawful and that unlawful as it seemeth best to ye, even to the extent of trafficking in the cure of souls. I know well there be some that openly counsel this traffic, but I will not enter into that question now; some day, peradventure, I may have the courage to prove to ye that it is pure heresy." [1]

On Quinquagesima Sunday Savonarola preached for the last time during Carnival, treating the same subject and using the same arguments. "Laws are made for a good end, and should therefore be in agreement with reason and charity. Come forward, thou priest or friar, whom I have taken by the arm, and I will prove to thee that thou art like unto a painted image—with nought that is good within. If the end of the law be goodness, the quality of the law

[1] "Prediche sopra l'Esodo." *Vide* the sermon given on Sexagesima Sunday.

is made known by its fruit; where good works are, there is good law; where bad works are, there good law is not. Say, O Father! if all the world were against thee, what wouldst thou do? I would stand firm, for my doctrine is the doctrine of godly living, and therefore it proceedeth from God. This excommunication is hostile to godly living, and therefore proceedeth from the devil. Yet, Father, it is declared by the canonical law that even when excommunication be unjust and full of hidden errors it should nevertheless be respected for the avoidance of scandals. This is true so far, that if thou art excommunicated for a sin of which thou art innocent, but of which the people believeth thee guilty, thou must then submit in order to avoid scandal. But when thine innocence is patent to the eyes of all the world, as in our own case, what scandal hast thou to fear then? Moreover, I tell thee that if excommunicated in such wise, that to observe its decrees thou must needs act in opposition to charity, it then becomes thy duty to disregard it. Wert thou prohibited, under pain of excommunication, *latæ sententiæ*, from giving aid to one in extreme necessity, I must tell thee that, in such case, no excommunication should be held valid. Thinkest thou that laws be made for evil? Were unjust sentences to be held valid, a wicked Pope might destroy the whole Church, and it would behoove us to submit. For myself, I tell thee that these excommunications are now cheap commodities; and any one, for the sum of four *lire*, can excommunicate whomsoever he pleaseth; hence they are worth nothing."

As we see, the rupture had now become most decided. Convinced that charity was the supreme law of the Christian life; that no misconception was possible on this point; that no authority could prevail against it, Savonarola was resolved to despise the decree of excommunication and defy the Pope. The latter's mode of life, the

scandals and abominations perpetrated by himself, his children, and his courtiers in Rome, had convinced the Friar that resistance was a duty, and that God would come to his aid in the final struggle.[1] He therefore concluded this sermon by announcing that he should celebrate Mass on the last day of Carnival, and solemnly give his blessing to the people in the convent square. At the moment of the elevation of the Host he said, "I bid ye all pray fervently to the Lord, that if this work be not inspired by Him, He will send down His fires to bear me to hell.[2] Offer up the like prayer throughout these days; note it down and proclaim it to all." This was the blind and superstitious belief that Savonarola could never shake off, and that constantly threatened him with ruin. He felt firmly convinced that the Lord would perform some great miracle to prove the truth of his doctrine in the hour of need, and he reiterated his conviction with a mistimed simplicity that naturally tempted his enemies to take him at his word. His manner of solemnizing the last day of Carnival was certainly of the strangest. At the conclusion of High Mass he administered the sacrament to a vast crowd of people, and then ascended a wooden pulpit that had been erected for the occasion before the great door of the church. Here he offered a few prayers, while the monks sang Psalms and afterwards addressed the throng of people in the square, reminding them of the appeal he had begged them to make to the Almighty. Then, raising the Host on high, he blessed the kneeling crowd of excited worshippers and murmured the following

[1] It is impossible to doubt that the shameless immorality of the Pope was the chief cause of Savonarola's wrath and irritation. On the 1st of February, 1498, the Ferrarese orator wrote to the Duke that Savonarola had told him that he would take no orders from the Pope as regarded preaching or not preaching, "while he saw him continue his present mode of life" (Cappelli, op. cit., p. 102, doc. 142).

[2] "Prediche sopra l'Esodo." *Vide* the sermon delivered on Quinquagesima Sunday.

invocation: "O Lord, if my deeds be not sincere, if my words be not inspired by Thee, strike me dead on the instant." His countenance expressed the most extraordinary excitement, and it was plain that deepest faith dictated his words.

After the midday meal, the people again traversed the streets in procession, to collect contributions for a second Burning of the Vanities. But this time the Piagnoni had to endure much insult and injury from the Compagnacci, who stripped some of their cloaks, knocked the red crosses out of the hands of others, struck them with sticks, and pelted them with stones. Nevertheless the procession managed to reach the Piazza of the Signoria, where a pile of vanities had been stacked, of even greater value, according to Burlamacchi, than that of the previous year. It was crowned by a figure of Lucifer surrounded by the seven cardinal sins. The people gathered round the pile, chanting a *Te Deum;* and it was then fired and burnt to ashes amid shouts of frantic exultation. The procession afterwards repaired to the cathedral square, and halted there to consign all the money that had been collected to the *Buoni Uomini di S. Martino,* "St. Martin's Good Men." It then proceeded to St. Mark's, and a crucifix being set up in the middle of the square, friars and laymen joined hands in three rings and danced round it, singing psalms and devotional hymns.[1]

[1] Burlamacchi, p. 115 and fol.; Nardi, vol. i. p. 140. Again, as in speaking of the first bonfire, Nardi, the translator of Livy, and a lover of antiquity, merely records that "many dishonest, indecent, and vain things were consumed." He adds that, in this way, days formerly dedicated to worldly pleasures were now devoted to the honour and glory of Christ. But, what is still more remarkable, Somenzi, although decidedly hostile to Savonarola, wrote to the Duke from Florence that the pile consisted "of a great quantity of lustful things, *videlicet* mirrors, women's false hair, playing cards and tables, dice, lutes, masks, paintings, quantities of perfumes, and every species of lustful things; the which were valued at a considerable sum." *Vide* Appendix to the Italian edition, doc. xii. Is it likely that if really valuable objects of art had been included in

Thus ended the Carnival season of 1498, in which party passion had again come to life, and that was a time of such general excitement and expectation of strange events. Savonarola's new sermons, whether from the intrinsic force of his arguments, or from the singular daring with which he defied the Pope and inveighed against scandals abhorred by all, were undoubtedly received with new and increasing favour. They were printed separately as soon as delivered, and diffused throughout Italy and other countries. "Even from Germany," as Savonarola said, "letters reach us from new followers converted by our doctrines."[1] On all sides men were beginning to murmur against the Court of Rome, and, as may well be conceived, the Borgia's fury was proportionately increased. In one of the many letters written on the subject at the time, we find it said that "the news of his (the Friar's) preaching has again reached Rome, and excited great noise there. I doubt me there will be a sharper war, and that it will soon be carried on at close quarters: our ambassador there is beginning to feel alarmed."[2] Letters came daily from the orators in Rome, and Messer Domenico Bonsi wrote, saying: "I am assailed by a multitude of cardinals and prelates, who come to express severe blame regarding your Excellencies' conduct, and speak of the Pope's exceeding wrath. You have numerous foes here, who will all do their best to blow on the fire."[3] At the Roman Court nothing was talked of save the audacity of this Friar, who refused to acknowledge any authority as superior to that of God and

the collection, the learned Nardi and Somenzi, the bitter enemy of Savonarola, would have both failed to mention the fact?

[1] In the sermon on Quinquagesima Sunday.

[2] A letter from Strozzi to the parish priest of Cascina. *Vide* Perrens, doc. xv.

[3] Despatches to the Ten, dated 17th of February, 1498, and on the following days. *Vide* Padre Marchese, "Documenti," &c., op. cit., p. 164 and fol.

his own conscience; who stigmatized Pope Alexander as a *broken tool*, and dared to declare that all believers in the validity of the excommunication were heretics! With all this outcry sounding in his ears, the Pope's rage was so much inflamed, that it threatened to burst into a blaze at any moment. And among the more assiduous in fomenting his anger was Frà Mariano da Genazzano, who had sworn to take revenge, and saw that the moment for it was approaching. Indeed, so tremendous were the charges alleged by this man against Savonarola's doctrines, that he was at last commissioned to refute them publicly in the pulpit.

On the first Sunday in Lent the Church of the Augustine friars in Rome was unusually crowded; many eminent cardinals and prelates were seated before the high altar, and all had come to listen to Frà Mariano's sermon. Nevertheless the result by no means justified his repute as a great theologian and preacher. He started by treating of the authority of the Pontiff, and how the Holy Spirit descended upon him, as it had upon the apostles; but instead of at once proceeding to define and confute Savonarola's arguments, he gave free vent to his rage in loud bursts of vehement and almost indecent language: "This is the true light, not that of the Ferrarese monk, who preaches by the light of the devil, and dares to say that Pope Alexander is a broken tool. He is a vile Jew, a ribald and thief, who has stolen money and has hidden treasures! O Pope! O cardinals! how do you tolerate this monster, this hydra? Has the authority of the Church come to such a pass that a drunkard of this sort may trample it so ignominiously under his feet? O College! O Pontiff! take heed; you know not what that man is devising; he will say things to darken the sun. But you take no heed, so that all may now snap their fingers in your face, and, but for my reverence, I too

might do the same." Then in spite of this declaration of respect, he turned to the cardinals and made the vilest gesture, shouting the while like a madman. His hearers were highly disgusted with his coarseness of speech, and the cardinals, who had come prepared to listen to a logical refutation, could not refrain from continually shaking their heads in disapproval. Accordingly, Frà Mariano was discomfited afresh, but nevertheless remained firm to his purpose.[1]

Meanwhile Savonarola, in his untiring energy, had produced a new "Tractate on the rule and government of the city of Florence."[2] He had been urged to compose this work by the past Signory, and, as he records in its preface, had willingly accepted the invitation, "because, although he had preached on the truth of faith, the simplicity of the Christian life, on things to come, and on good government, he had never yet written a special treatise on the last of those themes.[3] He was now moved to write it, in the idea that it would be useful to his flock, and also to fulfil the duties of his office by giving another proof that he preached sound doctrine, in no way contrary to the Church." In the first part of this

[1] All this is minutely related in a letter, of which we possess an old copy, without date or signature: "Copia d'una lettera venuta da Roma della predicha di M. Mariano da San Ghallo, chontro a Frà Girolamo." Codex of the Magliabechian Library, cl. xxxiv. 288. Frà Mariano's monastery was situated at San Gallo. *Vide* Appendix to the Italian edition, doc. xiii.

[2] "Trattato circa il reggimento e governo della città di Firenze." This was printed without a date, during the author's life. See, too, the edition produced by Audins de Rians (Florence, 1848), who believed it to have been written in 1493, because the Gonfalonier Salviati, who urged Savonarola to compose it, was in office in '93, and again in January and February, '98. But a glance at the tractate is enough to show that it continually refers to facts long posterior to the year '93. It was probably written at the beginning of 1498.

[3] The other tractates to which he refers here were chiefly "Il Trionfo della Croce"; "Della semplicità della vita cristiana"; and "De veritate prophetica."

little work he states that man, being a free agent, needs to be governed, and is best governed by an absolute ruler when that ruler is a righteous man. Then, following the dictates, not only of reason, but of experience, he adds: "Government of this kind is not, however, suited to every people; on the contrary, the mutable, restless, ambitious character of the Florentines demands a civil government, or rather a Republic." The second part treats of government under a single ruler, in cases where the ruler is bad, or, in other words, of a despotic government. And here Savonarola describes tyrants and the evils of tyranny with perhaps greater eloquence than in his sermons, and certainly with more correctness and polish of style. The third and last part treats of free government by means of a Greater Council, the which, by reserving the right of appointment to all offices of the State, becomes a safeguard against popular anarchy and the tyranny of the few. The author concludes by describing the miseries of despots, and the happiness to be won both on earth and in heaven by those who govern by freedom. Nevertheless he always confines himself to generalities, with the intention of composing, at some less turbulent time, a more important and elaborate Latin treatise on the same theme. Now, in the midst of so many agitations, he wrote only for the people, and in fact this is the most popular and best known of all his works, owing to the vigorous simplicity and eloquence of its style.

After this, Savonarola undauntedly returned to the pulpit, and, dating from the beginning of Lent, continued to preach regularly. He spoke in terms of rejoicing of the devout celebration of Carnival, condemned the insulting attacks of the Compagnacci, discoursed on righteous living, and then recurred to what now formed almost the sole theme of his sermons. "O Rome! what is it that I ask of thee? A bull to enforce righteous

living—this is all that I would ask of thee; but here, on the contrary, men only demand bulls for the destruction of morality." [1] He was careful at this time to preserve a moderate tone, in the hope of continuing to preach without exciting fresh opposition; but the Pope, no longer able to restrain his fury, threatened to interdict Florence, and compel every Christian State, under pain of excommunication, to confiscate the property of all Florentine merchants. Nevertheless, the more sagacious of the cardinals contrived to calm his wrath to some extent [2] by pointing out to him that his conflict with Savonarola was not only causing great disturbance among the Florentines, but so much stir in all quarters, as to threaten a schism in the Church. A movement to that effect would, they said, be inevitable as soon as some influential ecclesiastic could be induced to take the lead in it; and such a man might readily be found in the Cardinal of San Piero in Vincoli, who was known to be abetted by France.

These considerations, added to his natural indifference, and dislike to all purely religious questions, induced the Pope to modify his resolve. But on the 26th of February he informed Bracci and Bonsi that he absolutely refused to tolerate Savonarola's preaching any longer; that he was amazed that the Signory should sanction so gross an insult to the Holy See, and that unless measures were taken to silence the Friar before Lent, he would certainly put the city under an interdict. Nor were the orators allowed to reply, for the cardinals interrupted them directly they opened their mouths, by reading aloud some sonnets against the Pope, which had just been received from Florence. And Alexander

[1] Sermon iv., "sopra l'Esodo," given on the last day of February and the first of Carnival.

[2] Nardi, vol. i. p. 138.

immediately exclaimed: "What! am I to be made a theme for sonnets?" Bonsi finished his letter by saying: "Therefore, now that the last sermons have arrived in Rome, all our trouble is lost, and there is some one ever at hand to throw on tow and matches to increase the blaze." [1]

The following day (26th of February) the Pope despatched a very menacing brief to the Signory to the following effect: "On first receiving notice of the pernicious errors diffused by that child of iniquity, Girolamo Savonarola, we required him to abstain entirely from preaching, and to come to Rome to implore our pardon and make recantation; but he refused to obey us. We commanded him, under pain of excommunication, to join the Congregation of St. Mark to the new Tusco-Roman Congregation, and again he refused to obey, thus incurring, *ipso facto*, the threatened excommunication. The which sentence of excommunication we caused to be pronounced and proclaimed in your principal churches, likewise declaring that all who heard, or addressed, or held intercourse with the said Frà Girolamo would also incur the same penalty. Nevertheless, we now hear, that, to the grave hurt of religion and the souls of men, this Friar still continues to preach, despises the authority of the Holy See, and declares the excommunication to be null and void. Wherefore we command you, by your duty of holy obedience, to send the said Frà Girolamo to us, under safe custody; and if he return to repentance, he will be paternally received by us, inasmuch as we seek the conversion, not the death of the sinner. Or at least put him apart, as a corrupt member, from the rest of the people, and keep him confined and guarded in such wise, that he may have speech of none, nor be able to disseminate fresh scandals. But if ye refuse to obey these

[1] *Vide* Gherardi, "Nuovi Documenti," pp. 106–108, the letter dated 25th of February, 1498.

commands, we shall be forced to assert the dignity and authority of the Holy See, by subjecting you to an interdict and also to other and more effectual remedies." [1]

The Signory paid no attention to the brief, but the Pope, perhaps foreseeing this, sent another at the same time to the Canons of the Duomo,[2] enjoining them to absolutely prohibit Savonarola from preaching in their church. Accordingly, dating from the 2nd of March, the third day of Lent, we find him delivering his sermons in St. Mark's, and beginning with the following exordium: "When it was needful, we gave ye a proof of courage, and are disposed to give others, when the moment shall arrive; but at present it rather beseems us to use moderation." [3] He thus tried to avoid giving offence, while waiting to see of what elements the new Signory for March and April would be formed.

But this proved almost utterly hostile, only three of the members being well disposed to him, while the remaining six were determined foes. One of these was the Gonfalonier, Piero Popoleschi, who, notwithstanding his name, had always belonged to the Medicean party. Instead, however, of joining the Bigi, he had gone over heart and soul to the Arrabbiati, and was now one of those most bent upon persecuting Savonarola. Accordingly, no sooner did the new Signory receive notice of the Papal brief, than they determined to assemble a Pratica, in order to gauge the temper of the citizens, and avoid assuming at once too odious a responsibility. So, on the 3rd of March they summoned a council to deliberate

[1] This brief was unknown, until unearthed by me in Codex 2053 of the Riccardi Library. Signor Gherardi afterwards discovered the original document in the Florence Archives. *Vide* Appendix to the Italian edition, doc. xiv. Meier assigns the date of the 26th of February to another brief that will be mentioned farther on.

[2] This brief I have been unable to find; but it is mentioned in Bonsi's letter of the 27th of February. *Vide* Gherardi, loc. cit., p. 108.

[3] "Prediche sopra l'Esodo." *Vide* the sermon of the third day of Lent.

on the best mode of pursuing the Pisan war with so little money in their coffers, and above all on the measures to be adopted concerning the Friar after the brief from Rome. This indeed was the real object of the Pratica.

The Gonfaloniers of the Companies, the twelve Worthies, and other officials confined themselves to generalities, saying that it would be best to calm the Pope's wrath by making him understand that, if they were to lay hands on the Friar, the whole city would be in a tumult. But the Ten of Liberty and Peace[1] were far more explicit. Owing to the importance of their functions it was their special duty to answer all demands then put by the Signory. And as they differed from that body, by holding office for six instead of two months, they had hitherto been unanimous in favour of Savonarola. Accordingly Battista Ridolfi, their appointed spokesman, made a long speech, beginning with a most melancholy picture of the condition of the Republic: "We have disbursed twenty thousand ducats," he said, "and of the fifteen thousand, per month, you assigned to us, have received almost nothing. Our enemies are daily increasing; the Venetian fleet is nearing the port of Leghorn; the dearness of provisions and the disorganization of the troops would prevent us from taking the field on any emergency. Leghorn, a most important position as regards supplies, merchandise, and artillery, stands in great need of repairs, which we cannot afford to make. Volterra, which should be well garrisoned, is left defenceless; the adjacent hills are abandoned, and would fall into the enemy's hands at the first attack. It is the same with the cities in the plains. Pescia and its valley are exposed to the foe. Through-

[1] At that time, as we all know, the Ten of War were designated by this name, in accordance with one of the laws promoted by Savonarola, when the popular government was first constituted.

out the district above Vagliano, which is another important place, constables, commissioners, and soldiery are all clamouring for money. The Pisans are already making raids in Maremma, and the plague does the rest. Wherefore the Signori, my colleagues, implore that fitting measures be taken, since the safety of the whole State is in question, and whatever should go wrong, they will be excused *coram Deo.*" [1]

Coming to the subject of Savonarola, Ridolfi then said: "My Signori are of opinion that we should avoid quarrel with the Pope, but must look to the honour of God and the Republic: that it consequently behoves us to thoroughly investigate the Pope's statements, and ascertain whether his complaints be just or not, and if that which he ordains be for good or ill. They decidedly hold the Friar to be a man of virtuous life and great learning, who has never caused any evil in Florence, but always rendered good service both in spiritual and temporal matters. Wherefore if the Pope be opposed to his deeds owing to false information, let all be at once made clear to him in writing; but if (as my Signori think) the affair stands on a different footing, then our sole care should be to uphold the honour of our city. For in fact," concluded Ridolfi, "letters from Milan assure us that the Pope has suddenly changed his mood, and become hostile to the Republic, not only on account of the Friar's sermons, but for other good reasons also; [2] hence our replies should be easy and brief. My colleagues would finally pray you to remember how everything went

[1] In Signor Lupi's collection of "Pratiche" or debates concerning Savonarola affairs ("Archivio Storico Italiano," Series iii. vol. iii. part i.) the whole of this passage is omitted, possibly because it does not relate to Savonarola. Most of these documents were previously known to me in MS., but a few were discovered by Signor Lupi.

[2] Namely, for entirely political reasons, such as his desire to overthrow the Florentine government.

wrong in Florence in consequence of the expulsion of Frà Bernardino." [1]

The citizens' benches then expressed their views, saying: "That the brief gave them much pain, but that the expulsion of the Friar from Florence would cause the most serious disturbance throughout the city. It might be well, in sign of obedience to the Pope, to prohibit the Friar from preaching in the Duomo, especially as he had withdrawn to St. Mark's on the previous day.[2]

The real meaning of all this was that they did not intend to do anything, and the Signory were compelled to yield to the verdict of the majority. Therefore on the following day various letters were forwarded by the Ten to the Florentine ambassador in Rome, together with one from the Signory to the Pope.[3] They stated that on the arrival of the last brief, Savonarola had immediately withdrawn to St. Mark's to prove his submission; they eulogized his doctrine, his life, and his prophecies; and expressed their condemnation of his enemies, "who detest light more than darkness, and merely seek to foment civil discord." And they ended by saying: "We are unable to obey the commands of your Holiness, not only because, in obeying them, we should act unworthily towards our Republic, and unjustly towards one who has deserved so well of his country; but also because, even if we had the will, we lack the power to obey without exciting popular dissensions and placing many persons in danger: such and so great is the favour

[1] Frà Bernardino da Monte Feltro, expelled during the reign of Piero de' Medici. *Vide* Parenti, "Storia di Firenze."

[2] *Vide* the before-quoted "Pratiche." This stands third in Signor Lupi's collection.

[3] Dated 4th of March, but really written on the 3rd, as can be ascertained from many subsequent documents. *Vide* also Gherardi's "Nuovi Documenti," p. 111, Note 4.

won by this Friar's integrity. We are sorely pained that these matters should have turned the heart of your Holiness against us, and that you now deprive us of the hopes you formerly held out, touching the material welfare of our Republic.[1] Nevertheless, we shall continue to maintain our wonted allegiance to the Church and the Catholic faith, only premising that the good of our Republic is nearer to our hearts than the convenience of others."[2]

It is certainly hard to understand why a Signory that was avowedly opposed to Savonarola should have spoken so earnestly in his favour.[3] It was probably with the malicious design of increasing the irritation of the Pope. For, while replying in the terms suggested by the Pratica, they were thus stirring Alexander to a more violent rejoinder. This, too, is the explanation given by the Milanese orator to his master, the Duke.[4] It is certain, at any rate, that the letter was sent in the name of the new Signory, and that Savonarola quietly continued his sermons in St. Mark's.

This church, being too small for the multitude of his hearers, admittance was granted only to men. The women went at first to hear him preach in San Lorenzo, and when the canons forbade him the use of that pulpit, they repaired to S. Niccolò in Via del Cocomero, to attend the sermons of Frà Domenico da Pescia. But

[1] The question of Church tithes, and the surrender of Pisa.

[2] *Vide* Documents in Padre Marchese's before-quoted work, p. 165. The letter is written in Latin.

[3] Mons. Perrens held this to be an argument for denying that the Signory were really opposed to Savonarola; but all doubt on this point is removed by the evidence of contemporary opinion and of subsequent events.

[4] In fact the Milanese orator informed Ludovico in the first days of March that after the brief of the 26th of February, the Signory had written to the Pope in defence of Savonarola in order that the irritated Pontiff "might be forced to go farther." *Vide* Appendix to the Italian edition, doc. xii.

they so earnestly besought Savonarola to let them again hear his voice, that he was obliged to devote every Saturday to preaching specially to them.[1]

The favourite theme of these last Lenten sermons was the definition of how and when a Pope may commit error. "To declare that the Pope, as Pope, can do no wrong, is the same as to say, that neither the Christian as a Christian, nor the ecclesiastic as an ecclesiastic, can do wrong, but that, as individuals, Pope, Christian, or ecclesiastic is equally liable to error.[2] . . . As Pope he cannot err, since the Pope is merged in his office, but when he errs, he is no Pope; and if he issues a wrongful command, it cannot be held to proceed from the Pope.[3]—O Friar, the Pope is God upon earth, and the vicar of Christ.—That is true, but God and Christ command us

[1] Burlamacchi, p. 96.

[2] "Prediche sopra l'Esodo," Sermon vii. This and the preceding sermon are mentioned by Machiavelli in a letter *to a friend*, dated the 8th of March (common style). In this the writer shows himself decidedly unfavourable to Savonarola, since, as we have pointed out elsewhere, he had some leaning, in early youth, towards the Arrabbiati faction, and only modified his opinion of the Friar at a riper age. This is how he speaks of him in the letter in question: "Going to hear the Friar in his own house (the Convent of St. Mark's), and noting the courage with which he began and continued his sermons, it was impossible not to entertain much admiration for him; for—starting with very terrifying words and with arguments such as seemed most convincing to those who did not discuss them—he declared all his followers to be excellent, and his adversaries most vile, dwelling on all the points suited to weaken the contrary side and fortify his own; and as I was present at the time, I will describe some of these things." After giving certain minute details, Machiavelli next says: "He began to tear your books to pieces, O priests, and to treat you as though ye were not fit food for dogs." As to those who sought to become tyrants, "he said so much, that men went about that day making public conjectures about one who is no nearer a tyrant than you are near heaven! . . . Of the Pope, he says all that could be said of the vilest wretch you please; and thus, in my opinion, he goes on *favouring the times*, and giving colour to his falsehoods." These last words, although very exaggerated with respect to Savonarola, show the general hostility to Rome still pervading in Florence.

[3] Sermon xi.

to love our brother and to do good; wherefore if the Pope command thee to do some deed opposed to charity, if thou obey, then thou wouldst grant more to the Pope than to God." [1] "The Pope may be led into error not only by false reports, but sometimes also from hatred to charity, like unto Pope Boniface VIII., who was a bad Pope, to whom the evil one had said: I will that thou destroy this Order of preaching friars: who began like a fox and died like a dog." "Our Order hath often fought and withstood Popes who sought to do evil.[2] Do we not behold a proof of it now? If I desire to forsake religion and do evil, a bull is soon granted me and full licence; but to do good no sanction is allowed.[3] And the cause of all this great corruption of the Church is the temporal power. When the Church was poor, she was holy; but when temporal power was conferred on her, then her spiritual power was cast down: she was overwhelmed in the dust of riches and worldly things, and began to be puffed with pride." [4]

It is clear that Savonarola felt that the catastrophe was at hand and could no longer be averted. Nevertheless, instead of withdrawing from the fight and, as would have been easy, seeking safety in concealment, he persisted in trying to achieve the reform of the Church, even at the risk of his own ruin. Hence he now ventured to more openly suggest the assembly of a council, a subject on which he had hitherto observed great caution, merely alluding to it in metaphorical sentences such as the need *of giving a turn to the key*, and so on. Now, with some

[1] Sermon xviii. [2] Sermon vii. [3] Sermon xvi.

[4] Sermon xii. One of the arguments most frequently urged by him in these sermons was the *indelible* character of the priesthood. "No priest," he said, "can be deprived of this, even by the Pope; he bears it with him even to hell; excommunication cannot annul his power of administering the sacraments; and this is also the opinion of St. Thomas Aquinas." *Vide* Sermons xii and xiii.

hesitation, as it were, he started the subject with a Latin quotation: "*Venerunt simul, et congregaverunt cunctos seniores filiorum Israel.* . . . This is a fine point; but I will hold it in reserve yet a while, and will keep it here in my pouch: the moment is not yet come. I will only say this:—Tell me, O Florence, what meaneth a council? How is it that your children are in ignorance concerning this thing, how is it that none is assembled nowadays?—O Father, they cannot be gathered together.—Peradventure thou sayest the truth; but I know not if thou regardest the matter as I regard it. A council signifieth a meeting of the Church, *id est*, of all the good abbots and prelates, and worthies and laymen belonging to the Church. But take heed that one doth not invite the Church properly so called, unless where there be the gift of the Holy Spirit. And nowadays where is this form of the Church to be found? Possibly the gift of the Holy Spirit is only to be found in some lowly good man; and for this reason thou mightest well say that no council can be called. In a council there must needs be reformers to sweep away abuses: and where can we find these reformers? *Item* in a council, wicked priests are chastised, and a bishop guilty of simony or schism would be deposed. Oh! how many would have to be deposed! Perhaps none would be left! . . . That is why it is impossible to assemble this council.—What must be done then? Pray the Lord that the day may come for it to be at last called together, to favour and assist those that seek to do right, and to combat the wicked." [1]

These words clearly prove that Savonarola was waiting for a suitable moment to risk an attempt to summon a council, before which he could make an open attack upon Alexander VI., and endeavour to set on foot the much needed reform of the Church. The fury aroused in the

[1] Sermon xiii.

Pope by these utterances may easily be imagined by all. But the actual extent of his wrath, and his numerous and varied devices to conquer the Friar, and force the Republic to lend itself to his sinister purpose, are only to be learnt by following the thread of this history. From this moment the plot daily becomes more and more complicated; and new passions and new schemes combine to hurry it to a climax.

# CHAPTER VI.

*COLLOQUY OF THE FLORENTINE AMBASSADOR WITH THE POPE. MORE BRIEFS AND FRESH THREATS. THE SIGNORY CALLS NEW MEETINGS, AND SAVONAROLA IS INHIBITED FROM PREACHING. HIS LAST LENTEN SERMON AND FAREWELL ADDRESS TO THE PEOPLE. HIS LETTER TO THE POPE, AND OTHER LETTERS TO THE PRINCES.*

(MARCH, 1498.)

THE Signory's despatch in defence of Savonarola reached Rome on the evening of the 6th of March, and was delivered the next day to the Pope by the two Florentine ambassadors. Alexander seemed much incensed when his secretary read him its contents. "Your Signory," he said, "have written me a wicked letter. I am not misinformed, for I have read your Friar's sermons, and spoken with those who have heard them. He dares to say that the Pope is a broken tool, that it is heretical to believe in the efficacy of the excommunication, and that he would rather go to hell than ask to be absolved from it." Then, becoming more and more excited as he went on, he complained of the Signory for allowing the Friar full liberty to preach, adding that even Savonarola's retreat to his convent had not been enjoined by them. And he concluded by declaring that unless the sermons were finally stopped, he would lay the city under an interdict. On this point he spoke so decidedly, that the

orators ended their report to the Ten with the following words: And we are firmly convinced he will do as he says." They tried to defend Savonarola's character and doctrine; but after hearing what they had to say, the Pope replied, "that he objected neither to his good doctrine nor his good works, but condemned him on the score that, being excommunicate, he proved his contempt for the Holy See by neither asking absolution nor yielding obedience."

After this conversation the two orators took their leave, and the Holy Father, in the presence of many bishops and cardinals, gave way to a paroxysm of true Spanish fury, threatening complete ruin on the Republic and the Friar. Thereupon many of the bystanders hastened to Bonsi imploring him to convince the Signory of the necessity of taking strong measures, and, above all, of putting a stop to the sermons if they wished their city to escape serious harm. For Piero de' Medici was going about offering heavy bribes to all who would assist his restoration to Florence; the Arrabbiati were writing and storming to the same effect; and the Milanese and Venetian ambassadors insisting that the Florentines should be forced to join the League. The Pope, therefore, was positively determined to lay them under an interdict, unless they ceased to protect this Friar, who was threatening to throw the whole Church into confusion. At this moment, too, there was so much ill-will in Rome against Florence that Bonsi's house was attacked by armed men, with the evident intent of killing its owner. In the last week of February and first of March he sent repeated accounts of these things to the Ten.[1] And shortly afterwards we find him despatching another letter

[1] *Vide* Gherardi, "Nuovi Documenti," the remarks at p. 104 and in Note 1. *Vide* also at pp. 104–105, the letters dated 22nd and 25th of February. The letter of the 7th of March is included among the "Documenti" edited by Padre Marchese (doc. xx.), p. 167.

to the Signory,[1] insisting on the necessity of prohibiting Savonarola from preaching, and adding that this was the only way to facilitate an agreement with the Pope. Meanwhile he enclosed a copy of another and still more threatening brief, to the following effect:—"We should never have supposed that your audacity would rise to the point of contending with us concerning the affairs of Fràte Girolamo Savonarola, almost as though it were a question of carrying on a quarrel, and forgetful of your duty of rendering to Cæsar that which is Cæsar's, to God that which is God's. Wherefore it now behooves us to put an end to these letters and briefs which are multiplying *ad infinitum*. Know therefore and be assured that this Frà Girolamo has been excommunicated by us, owing to no false reports nor instigation from others; but through his disobedience to our commands, as to joining the new Tusco-Roman Congregation, and the manifest contempt he has shown for our decree of excommunication, in continuing to preach as though he were an angel sent by the Lord. We do not condemn him for his good works and the results achieved by him in your city; on the contrary, for all this he has our praise; but we desire that he should come to ask pardon for his petulant pride, and we will readily grant him our forgiveness, when he shall have humiliated himself before us. You have not only encouraged this Friar in his disobedience; but, by preventing all others from preaching, have constituted him, as it were, your oracle of Apollo.[2] Wherefore we shall never desist from our efforts until reparation be made to the honour and dignity of the Holy See, for the insults of this vile worm ye have fostered.[3] Where-

[1] Gherardi, "Nuovi Documenti," p. 116.

[2] "A vobis publico edicto vetari obtinuerit ne quis præter eum evangelizaret populo vestro verbum Dei; volens unicus pro Apollineo quodam Florentinorum oraculo haberi satis."

[3] "Ita turbamur, ut quieturi non simus, donec honori Sanctæ huius Sedis, tot modis a tenui isto vermiculo, calore vestro, ulcerato, consuluerimus."

fore take good heed as to your own affairs:[1] for not until ye be disposed to obedience will we stoop to grant the requests ye have made us concerning the material interests of your Republic.[2] In any case ye must now reply to us by deeds alone, instead of by farther letters,[3] since we are most firmly resolved to no longer tolerate your disobedience, and will lay the whole city under interdict, and never remove it so long as ye shall continue to favour and protect this monstrous idol of yours."

Almost at the same time another brief, nearly identical in substance, but milder in form, was officially and directly transmitted from the Pope to the Signory. In the former of the two he had expressed himself more clearly, and as it were confidentially, because he knew the government to be adverse to the Friar; but in this public document he lowered his tone, in the hope of winning over the Ten and the rest of the Piagnoni. After the usual recapitulation of the history of all the preceding briefs and the decree of excommunication, he again stated that he could not condemn, and must rather praise, Savonarola's life and doctrine,[4] but could no longer tolerate his insolence.

[1] "Et per interventum simplicis Fratris ne cadat ut aiunt musca in lac, quod inter nos et vos bonis rationibus sensim coagulat."

[2] The Church tithe and the surrender of Pisa.

[3] "Tamdiu duraturo, quamdiu vestro isti monstruoso idolo favorem præstabitis." Mons. Perrens (doc. xi.) published this brief (undated) from the Codex in the Marcian Library of Venice, adding, however, that it was an answer to the Signory's letter of the 4th of March. Herr Meier, on the other hand, assigned it the date of the 26th of February (p. 145, Note 2). Neither of these authors was aware of the existence of the real brief of the 26th of February, quoted in the preceding chapter, and discovered by me in the Codex 2053 of the Riccardi Library in Florence. The brief alluded to here, and discovered by Mons. Perrens, must be posterior to the 26th of February, and is in perfect accordance with all that is related in Bonsi's despatches of the 7th and 9th of March. Of this brief also I discovered an undated copy in the Codex 2053 mentioned above.

[4] "Quæcumque enim de illius religione et fructibus in ista Civitate ex ipsius admonitionibus subsecutis literæ vestræ attestantur, *non improbavimus nec improbamus, immo huiusmodi opera quæ vobis gratissima sunt magnopere* commendamus."

"Not only," so ran the brief, "has he refused to submit to excommunication, but has declared it to be null, and dared to call upon God to send him to hell if he should ask to be absolved from it. We will no longer tolerate him, nor waste time in correspondence. Ye must prevent him from preaching and give him into our hands, or at least keep him in safe custody, until he abases himself at our feet to implore absolution. This we would then graciously grant, since we ask nothing better, after receiving his submission, than to give him absolution, so that he may continue to preach the word of God."[1] And he once more concluded by saying that, if the Signory refused to do this, they might expect an interdict or even worse punishment.[2]

[1] "*Quem benigne et libenter excipiemus, ut eum penitentem, absolvamus et Ecclesiæ restituamus*, quem postea apostolico favore his vinculis liberatum et expeditum, ad vos remittemus, ubi verbum Dei evangelizando animas lucrifacere possit."

[2] This second brief, of the 9th of March, was discovered and published by Signor Gherardi; *vide* "Nuovi Documenti," p. 117. He states his opinion (p. 115) that the undated brief, as published by Mons. Perrens, was the original draft, and that it was afterwards modified and tempered at the intercession of some of the cardinals. Thus, in his view, the brief of the 9th of March was the only one sent, first through Bonsi, and then directly from the Pope to the Signory. But in that case how comes the undated brief to be comprised in the old Venetian and Riccardi Codices? The latter Codex, it should be remembered, was compiled by a contemporary of Savonarola, and both contain important collections of documents which have always proved to be authentic. If the draft of the brief was annulled without being sent to Florence, how is it that several old copies of it are extant, and why was it included by an expert among authentic documents? Consequently, my own opinion is that there were two briefs, and that the first and more confidential one was despatched by Bonsi with his letter of the 9th of March. This brief must have been of earlier date than the 9th of March, otherwise it is scarcely probable that the orator could have despatched it to Florence the same day. The delays incidental to government offices would hardly have allowed him to send it off before the 10th or 11th of the month. And although a double brief was by no means a regular thing, it should be kept in mind that Alexander VI. observed no rules at that period. I will also add another remark. In the Pratica of the 14th of March, 1498, of which I shall have to speak farther on, Messer Guidantonio

It is very clear that the nearer the Pope approached the point of resorting to violence, the more cautious and circumspect he became—apart from the harshness of his language—in order to ensure his success. He was using all his cunning to induce the more stubborn of the Florentines to give way. After having so long and ingeniously veiled the political question under the guise of a religious dispute, now that Savonarola accepted this as the basis of the quarrel and appealed to the judgment of a council, he hurried, as if in terror, to put the religious dispute aside by reducing it to a mere question of discipline. Savonarola's doctrine was sound, his life admirable; the only point of attack was his obstinate refusal to obey, and on this the dignity of the Church would admit of no compromise. Let him come to Rome, and all would be ended. This was true, for then he would have been at once seized and strangled in the Castle of St. Angelo. Meanwhile, although the Pope's wrath was hot, his request seemed reasonable, and so the Signory could hopefully submit it to the Pratica that was assembled on the 14th of March.

This was one of the most numerous and important meetings held during these days. In addition to all the principal magistrates, it was attended by twenty-five citizens from each quarter of the town, divided, according to custom, in different benches. Whether sincerely or insincerely, all spoke in high praise of the Friar's life and the benefits he had conferred on the city. But after this, opinions were divided. Some wished to yield to the

Vespucci, in reply to those who considered Florence to be insulted by the terms of the brief, said that he thought "the first brief was a little more imperious, this last one more moderate in tone." Other orators also alluded to two briefs. It might, of course, be supposed that the *first brief* was that of the 26th of February, but that was not *more imperious*, and besides, a Pratica had already been called on the 3rd of March, to consult how to reply to it.

Pope, and were in dread of the interdict; while others mocked at it, and declared that Savonarola should be allowed to continue his sermons. The debate was fierce, for now that it was known that the brief had been sent at the solicitation of the Arrabbiati and the allied powers, the affair was converted into a political and party question. Many speeches were made, and some were of considerable length. Public and private interests, political and religious passions, Pagan and Christian ideas are so strangely jumbled in this debate, that it affords us a photographic picture of the temper of the Florentines of that day.

Giovanni Canacci, the spokesman of the twelve newly-elected Worthies, described the injuries which the interdict would bring upon the commerce of Florence, and was therefore of opinion that the sermons should be stopped. "For my own part," he added, "I would even go farther, and hand over the Friar to the Pope, who has a right to punish him. We must render to every one that which is his. Remember," he exclaimed, as though alleging an irresistible argument, "that the city of Troy was burnt and destroyed through its refusal to give up Helen. And you know what happened in consequence of the capture of Hanno the Carthaginian. After examples such as these, shall we deny the Pope his own?"

Paolo Antonio Soderini, a citizen of weighty influence, then rose to speak against the brief in the name of the Ten, saying that, "even to the Perugians,[1] no such brief should have been sent; that it was an apple of discord purposely thrown into the city by their enemies. The Pope must be made to understand that they would not join the League at any price, but were bent on maintaining the honour of God and the security of their country. As

[1] The frequent repetition of this phrase shows that Florence was strongly irritated against Perugia just then.

to Frà Girolamo, he was to be cherished like a rare and precious jewel, since all Italy had not his equal." And Lorenzo Lanzi, in the name of the officials of the Monte di Pietà, was moved by Soderini's words to declare that—"One should rinse one's mouth before speaking of Frà Girolamo, instead of proposing to hand him over to the Pope. Where should we be, but for his aid? Why should you fear an interdict? Let it come, as others have come on us before! What worse could befall us than that sudden attack by the Emperor, who was stirred against us? Did not the Lord then come to your rescue? Rather ye should make known to the Pope all the doctrine and goodness of this servant of God!"

But hereupon another speaker broke in. This was Messer Guidantonio Vespucci, who was equally influential as an advocate and a citizen, and who, in 1494, had opposed Soderini, and been the champion of aristocratic government in Florence. His speech was a masterpiece of astuteness, legal syllogisms, and sophistry. "This is a very serious affair," he said; "we should weigh the *pro* and the *contra*, the good or evil that may result to the city. It is certainly to be regretted," he added, with hypocritical unction, "that we should be deprived of spiritual consolation during Lent; but, all things considered, it is wiser to yield to the Pope. We desire the Tithe on Church property, we desire Pisa and the absolution of the Friar. Now, to ask these favours of the Pope, while giving him offence, seems to me contrary to reason. Whether Frà Girolamo be in the right or in the wrong, you will obtain nothing from the Pope without giving him satisfaction. And if the interdict be imposed, your commerce will be ruined. But *versâ vice*"—and here the lawyer's cunning became almost demoniacal—"when one reflects on the harm that may ensue to the city by suspending the Friar's sermons, it must also be remembered

that, as the command emanates from our lawful superior, no sin is incurred by ourselves. He who fears censure, even when it be unjust, is approved of the Lord. Some hold this to be a small thing, but I deem it great, for the right of censure is now the sole weapon of the Church, and she will try to enforce it by every means, seeing that otherwise she would forfeit all her influence over mankind. It is urged that we should guard the honour of God, but these are ambiguous words, for it is certain that the power of the Pope is derived from God, whereas it is doubtful whether Frà Girolamo be truly a messenger of the Lord. Wherefore we judge it to be expedient to render obedience to the Pope in whatever way your Excellencies think best."

This speech made an extraordinary impression, since it showed the Florentines, who cared little for religion, how to secure their own interests without hurt to their conscience. But Messer Enea della Stufa, the first to speak for the citizens' benches, tried to combat the proposal, by saying: "God came to our aid even when all Italy was against us. Why should we now abandon the safe course pointed out to us by the Friar's sermons, to enter on a doubtful one? The Pope is an authority on spiritual, but not on temporal, things. It would be beneath our dignity to become his instruments, *et ut ita dicam*, his turnkeys. This is all the work of the potentates," he exclaimed, "and if you yield on this point, the Pope will exact even viler deeds from you. The members of my bench are not afraid of the interdict, and believe that, even if it were imposed, the trade of the city would go on as before, and bales of wool be packed and unpacked as usual." But his words produced little effect. Vespucci had succeeded in giving voice to the feeling then destined to prevail, and many now rose to second his motion; among them, Giuliano dei Gondi, who plainly said that

nearly all of his bench wished to vote for the suspension of the sermons. "Are we to put ourselves against the whole world? The interdict would cause grievous harm, and many of us have already ceased to send merchandise to Naples and elsewhither. If Messer Enea had anything to lose he would speak in a different tone. I, whose wine-casks are scattered all over Italy and in foreign parts, know well that, if the interdict be imposed on us, I shall be unable to meet my obligations. We shall be pillaged on all sides."

That the affair was taking a very bad turn was still more clearly seen when Francesco Valori began to speak for his bench, although, to avoid making matters worse, he was far more cautious than usual. "Not a word has been said among us of closing St. Mark's, for in a free city no good works, but only unlawful works, are forbidden. This monastery is a school of virtue, and will be in still higher repute fifty years hence. As regards the Friar, I advise you to honour and venerate and cherish him more dearly than any one that has ever existed during the last two hundred years. These Briefs do not emanate spontaneously from the Pope, but are wheedled out of him by enemies of our city. We must proceed very cautiously, for if this wheel be turned it will only raise a disturbance." Antonio Canigiani was more explicit, for he frankly said: "That his bench feared neither excommunications nor interdicts, knowing that certain Florentines were at the bottom of it all. "It is needless to refer to heathen examples! The Old and New Testaments suffice to show that Frà Girolamo is a true prophet. And as the Pope approves of his doctrine and his life, how can he excommunicate him? I do not dispute the authority of the Pope, but I say that he is liable to error, and I have more fear of God's wrath than of his. I will not discuss the validity or invalidity of the excommunication, but I say that this city has never

recognized any superior power, and beg to remind your Excellencies that our freedom must not be subject to the behest of a pontiff." But these words had no more effect than those of Bernardo Nasi, who, almost with tears in his eyes, wound up by exclaiming: "God grant that those who love to see scandal, may not see so much as might move stones to pity. I beseech your Excellencies to be on the alert, for here our liberty is in danger." [1]

Of thirty-two orators, eight only were decidedly favourable to the Friar; seventeen had advised, more or less earnestly, the suspension of the sermons, and the rest were uncertain. It was, accordingly, but too plain that things were going ill for Savonarola, and that the hostile Signory might now venture on some decision against him. The truth was that Alexander VI. feigned to be so mild and to ask so little, in order that it might seem sheer obstinacy to refuse obedience at the risk of harming the city. But the first point once yielded, the adverse party would triumph, and the rest would follow of itself. It was precisely this that embittered the strife. On the one hand the Florentines had to think of their material interests, on the other, of their moral and religious welfare. The dispute might have risen to true historical importance had the Florentines appreciated the necessity of defending virtue, justice, and freedom of conscience at all risks, and of firmly resisting this guilt-stained Pope. But they had no strong feeling in the matter. Savonarola's adversaries simply spoke from the standpoint of commercial interest, saying that it was inexpedient to rouse the Pope and the allies to hostility for the sake of a friar's sermons. Also, that however just Savonarola's cause might be, their consciences would be absolved by obedience to the Pope. To words such as

[1] This Pratica was quoted in the first edition of this work, and has since been published in Signor Lupi's collection of "Pratiche," loc. cit.

these an outburst of indignation would have been the only adequate reply. On the other hand, Savonarola's adherents failed to urge in his defence that he was the representative of the sacred right of freedom of conscience and the regenerator of faith, but upheld him as the messenger of the Lord, and the prophet by whom miracles were to be achieved. None dared to assail the Pope, whose authority was recognized by all. There was nowhere that resolve to subordinate worldly and material interests to those of morality, which at certain moments inspires nations to deeds of heroism. When expecting some irrepressible flight towards higher planes of moral and religious thought, we find instead cool calculations as to the injury the interdict might cause to the sale of wine and wool. When awaiting some impressive outburst of the evangelical spirit, so strenuously inculcated by Savonarola, we only hear allusions to Helen, the Trojans, or the Carthaginians. When hoping that the crimes of the Borgia would stir the conscience of the Florentines to some violent reaction, we find them remarking that in any case obedience, even to a Pope Alexander, would necessarily be a merit in the sight of the Lord. Consequently the ground was giving way beneath Savonarola's feet, for virtue and faith were his sole weapons of defence. The drama was hurrying to its predestined end.

But although the Signory had the majority of the Pratica on their side, before coming to a decision, they summoned another on the 17th,[1] limited to nineteen of the more influential citizens, from whom, as being *quasi cor Civitatis*, they asked fresh advice on the course to be pursued. This Pratica opined that Savonarola should be persuaded to abandon the pulpit, but

[1] There is only a note of this Pratica, without any details of the speeches in the "Frammenti di Pratiche," reg. 66, at sheet 25. *Vide* also Lupi's collection, loc. cit., and Nardi, vol. i. p. 142.

judged that the Pope's further requests were insulting to the Republic. The decreed result was immediately communicated to Bonsi by the Ten, who, being composed of the Friar's friends, wrote on the 18th of March: "That, although all were persuaded of the excellence of Savonarola's life and doctrine, which had gained praise even from the Pope, and although likewise convinced that the Briefs had been based on false reports, they had resolved to obey the Pontiff, in the hope that, according to his promise, he would soon console them, by restoring their spiritual food." [1]

Bonsi, who was already on the eve of becoming one of the Friar's worst foes, and was accordingly irritated by the continual praises of him expressed by the Ten, had addressed them an almost violent letter on the 16th of March. "I can obtain nothing, hope nothing from the Pope," he wrote, "unless you decide to put an end to the sermons. Do not imagine that you will be allowed to disregard the Papal excommunication and censures, which are now the only weapons retained by the Church. You may count on an interdict unless you obey. I am in continual peril of my life, and it will be worse when the interdict is launched. Wherefore I pray you to recall me without delay." [2] And a day or so later he wrote again to the same effect and in the same urgent tone, warning the Ten that Piero de' Medici seemed more cheerful than usual, and was holding continual interviews with the Pope. Also, that His Holiness, besides threatening an interdict, now declared that he would imprison all the Florentine merchants in Rome.[3] In fact, the latter wrote to the Signory in great alarm about this, on the 19th of March.[4] Therefore on the arrival of the dispatch from

[1] Gherardi, "Nuovi Documenti," p. 124. [2] Ibid. p. 121.

[3] He sometimes sent two despatches in one day. *Vide* Gherardi (loc. cit.), Bonsi's letters of the 18th, 19th, and 20th, at pp. 124, 126, and 128.

[4] Gherardi, p. 127.

the Ten, before dawn on the 22nd of March, the ambassador immediately sent to ask an audience of the Pope, who, after keeping him waiting all day at the Vatican, only received him on the 23rd. He was already aware of what had taken place, and showed cold satisfaction, but nevertheless demanded a reply from the Signory to his brief. He blamed them severely for still allowing other friars to preach in St. Mark's, who always repeated the same things. Then, all at once, he seemed pacified, saying that he would do good to Florence, and that he would pardon Savonarola and again permit him to preach as soon as the man asked absolution, "since, for his own part, he did not condemn his (the Friar's) doctrine, but only the fact of preaching while still unabsolved and of calumniating his person and disregarding his censure." [1] But this was by no means the Pope's real mind. In fact, on the 31st of March, Bonsi wrote that it had been impossible to obtain another audience, and that he had learned from the Cardinal of Perugia that the Pope intended to send a prelate to Florence with the object of inducing Savonarola to come to Rome. He would be safely guarded on the journey there and back, and not a hair of his head should be injured. Amazed at this, Bonsi had reminded the Cardinal of the repeated promises of the Pope, and observed that any attempt to remove Savonarola from Florence would indubitably rouse some serious disturbance. But all had been in vain, nor would the Pope consent to receive him just then. So he wrote that "the mind of his Holiness was being worked upon by persons desirous of promoting disturbance in our city." [2]

Meanwhile, on the 17th of March, the very day that

[1] Gherardi, op. cit., Bonsi's letter of the 23rd of March to the Signory, at p. 130, and his letter of the same date to the Ten, at p. 131.

[2] Gherardi, op. cit., Bonsi's letter to the Ten, at p. 133.

the Signory decided on silencing Savonarola, the latter had preached in St. Mark's to an audience composed solely of women. His sermon was full of tenderness, seemed almost a song of praise to the Lord, and expressed his gloomy presentiments in highly poetical terms: "Lord, we pray not for tranquillity, nor that our tribulations may cease; we pray for Thy spirit and Thy love; that Thou grant us strength and grace to overcome adversity. Thou seest that the wicked are growing more incorrigibly bad, wherefore put forth Thy power and Thy hand; tears are all that remain to me." The same evening he received the order forbidding him to preach, and the following day, the third Sunday in Lent, he gave his last sermon and bade farewell to his people.

He began with a thoroughly scholastic dissertation on primary and secondary causes; said that in absence of secondary, recourse must be had to primary causes, and then proceeded to the application of this principle. "Thus in the Church, the believer must first apply to his priest or confessor; failing these to his bishop or the Pope; and finally, if all the ecclesiastical hierarchy be corrupt, he must turn to Christ, who is the primary cause, and say—Thou art my confessor, my bishop and my Pope; provide Thou against the ruin of the Church; let Thy vengeance begin.—O Friar! thou wouldst weaken the ecclesiastical power!—This is not true; I have always submitted and even now submit to the correction of the Roman Church; I seek not to weaken, but rather to augment its power. But I will not be subject to the powers of Hell; and all power that is opposed to good, is not of God, but of the devil." [1] He then went on to

[1] Here it may not be superfluous to quote some of Frà Benedetto's ideas concerning the Church; for this monk was one of Savonarola's most devoted disciples. In his "Vulnera Diligentis" (bk. i. ch. 19, Magliabechian Codex, cl. xxxiv. 7, sheet 31[t]) one of the interlocutors is made to say that "the Church is simply a congregation of the faithful, *sive*

SAVONAROLA PREACHING TO THE NUNS.

discuss the great difficulties he had encountered in preaching his doctrines, the fierceness of the struggle in which he had been engaged, and the irresistible impulse by which he had been forced to it.

"Ofttimes, after leaving the pulpit, I have bethought me and said: I will preach no more of these things, but will rest quiet and leave all to God. And yet on again mounting to this place, I have been unable to contain myself; unable to preach otherwise. The message of the Lord hath been as a consuming fire within my bones and my heart; and I have not been able to endure it, but

*unitas iustorum.*" The other speaker inquires: "Why is it not absolutely said that *Ecclesia est Papa?*—Because the Pope is not precisely the real head of the Church, but vicar of the supreme head of the Church, Jesus Christ, that He not having remained on earth, bequeathed to his vicar the power to bind and to loose, justly *tamen* and not unjustly.—In that case," rejoins the first speaker, "Jesus Christ and His elect constitute the Church proper; and it is unfitting to say that the Church is composed of all who believe. Yet this does not imply that the Pope be not *aliquomodo* the Church, nor that as Pope he can be liable to error. . . . "

"Papa quidem, canonice, ut oportet, decidendo rem ad fidem et christianos mores pertinentem, errare penitus non potest. Et ita faciens, dicitur tota Ecclesia, que errare non potest, virtualiter in ipso Papa fecisse. Et breviter tanto in sustantia, it is to be said as follows, that when it is said commonly, that the Pope cannot err in canonical decisions, it signifies that all the Church cannot err, that is as being virtually personified in the Pope. Besides, the Church cannot err in its true member, *id est*, in no true Christian. Wherefore it is impossible that the Christian err as a Christian, or the Pope as the Pope, and it were blasphemy to say to the contrary. . . . But when the Pope is judge in his own cause, even as Alexander VI. when condemning the prophet (Savonarola), for he accused him of unjust deeds; then it is not *virtualiter*, the Church that gives judgment, but the Pope in his own cause. And in cases such as this the Pope is liable to error, through ignorance, or even through guilt; and then he is naught but a putrid member of the Church. . . . Now likening the Church to the likeness of a human body, I say and conclude, that the Holy Church has but one head, that is ascended into heaven, and that this head is Jesus Christ, the Son of God; that all there is upon earth is the neck, appertaining to that head, and that this neck is the Holy Pontiff." This language, rough and uncultured though it be, serves to acquaint us with the ideas and arguments held by many of Savonarola's followers, on the authority of the Pope and on the Church.

constrained to speak, for I feel all burning and all inflamed by the Lord's Spirit. But again, when I descend, I say in myself: I will no more speak of these things. O my Lord, O Spirit, Thou that fearest none in this world; Thou that art no respecter of persons be they who they may; Thou declarest the truth to all. O Spirit, Thou dost rouse persecutions and troubles against Thee; Thou stirrest the waves of the sea, like unto the wind; Thou raisest tempests. . . . I cry: Pray be still! but the Spirit replieth that it cannot rest. Let us therefore leave all to the Lord; He is the master that turneth the tool to His own ends, and when He needeth it no longer, casteth it aside, even as He cast aside Jeremiah who was stoned to death; and even so will it be with us, when we have served His end. Well! we are content: let the Lord's will be done, for the worse suffering is ours on earth, the greater will be our crown of glory in heaven."

Finally, Savonarola announced the decree received by him, and bade his hearers farewell: "Yesterday, at the third hour after sunset, there came hither a messenger from those who rule over us, saying that they prayed me, for many considerations, to preach no more. I asked—Come ye from your Masters?—Yes!—And I too must consult my Master: to-morrow ye shall have my reply.—I now make answer in this place, that the Lord hath granted and yet not granted your prayers: that is, hath granted them as to my abstention from preaching, but not granted them as regards your salvation. Bad news is coming to Florence, misfortunes will overwhelm her. Ye fear an interdict from the Pope; but the Lord will lay one upon ye that will deprive the wicked of life and of substance. We will obtain by our supplications that which we may not obtain by sermons; and we exhort all good men to do likewise. O Lord, I pray Thee, have mercy on the good, and delay Thy promises no longer." [1]

[1] The last of the sermons on Exodus.

Thus ended, on the 18th of March, 1498, the last sermon of Frà Girolamo Savonarola, who had preached continually in Florence for the last eight years, and without interruption save from his brief visit to Bologna, and occasional absence for a few days at Prato, Pistoia, Siena, and Lucca for the purpose of giving sermons in those cities. In Lent and Advent he had been daily in the pulpit; during the intermediate months had preached on every festival of the Church: and three stout volumes of his sermons had yearly appeared, collected by the indefatigable Violi. Thus Savonarola's life was spent, and his strength consumed for the moral, political, and material benefit of the Florentines who now condemned him to silence! Frà Domenico da Pescia and Frà Mariano Ughi continued to preach for a few days after the decree; but the Pope had already protested against this, and therefore, notwithstanding the excuses sent by the Ten, for the sake of delay, the Signory soon stopped these sermons also.[1]

Savonarola thoroughly understood the drift of these acts, and was determined not to be taken unawares. Ever since the arrival of the last Brief from Rome, he had clearly realized his present position, and being decided what course to adopt, had even pushed his loyalty to the point of communicating it to the Pope on the 15th of March. He was of so noble and generous a temper, that even when resolved on open war with this crafty and sinister foe, he felt obliged to give him fair warning to prepare for attack. "Most Holy Father," he wrote, "I always believed that it was the duty of a good Christian to defend religion, and purify manners; but in this task I have encountered nought but anguish and tribulation, and found none to give me aid. I placed my hope in your Holiness; but you have elected to take part with my enemies, and empowered savage wolves to assail me.

[1] *Vide* Padre Marchese, loc. cit., doc. xxii.

Nor would you by any means hearken to the reasons I brought forward—in no excuse of wrongdoing—but to prove the truth of my doctrines, my innocence, and my submission to the Church. Wherefore I can no longer hope aught from your Holiness, but can only appeal to Him that chooseth the weak vessels of this world to confound the roaring lions of wicked men. He will help me to prove and maintain, before the world, the holiness of the cause for which I endure so much, and He will inflict dire chastisement on those who persecute me and would defeat my work. For myself, I seek no earthly reward, but await death with longing. Let your Holiness delay no more, but take heed to your salvation." [1]

He was resolved to make a final effort to procure the assembly of a Council, appeal to it in his own defence, denounce the abominable life and crimes of Rodrigo Borgia, and declare his election void as having been obtained by simony. He would also prove that the Pope was a heretic and an unbeliever, that his life was unworthy of a Christian, and that he was accordingly the main source of all the evils lacerating the Church. Nor would there be any lack of documents, both public and private, to support these charges. Thus, the necessity of reforming the Church would be proved, and the enterprise finally begun. It was in allusion to this, that he had so frequently repeated the phrase: *One day we will give a turn to the*

[1] I have adopted the reading of the Riccardi Codex 2053, that is also followed by Meier. Burlamacchi gives a paraphrase of this letter, which he styles *a lesson to the Pope;* other contemporaries, as will be seen farther on, call it a *terrible letter.* Herr Rudelbach gives an Italian version of it in his "Savonarola und seine Zeit" (doc. xii.), that is even more daring in tone, but he does not say where he found it. Among other things it contains these words: "I am therefore prepared to maintain these truths, for which we now suffer so much evil from you; and prove them, I say, against you and all adversaries, by natural and supernatural arguments, and also by Divine intervention. And these things shall be manifested in such wise," &c. It is evident that the original text has been paraphrased by the translator. *Vide* also Quétif, vol. ii. p. 298.

*key*; we will cry aloud: *Lazare, veni foras*, and similar expressions. That day was now come.

To call a General Council without the authorization, or even against the will of the Pope, was not considered in those times, as it would be at present, an act of daring insubordination and violence. By the decrees of the Council of Constance, the Pope was bound to convoke a Council every ten years, and in case of neglecting so to do, the princes were authorized to summon all the scattered members of the Christian body to meet together and represent the Church Universal. King Charles VIII., who, when in Rome, had been advised by no fewer than eighteen Cardinals to seize the Borgia's person, in order to proceed to the election of a new and worthier Pontiff, had always been in favour of calling a Council, and being repeatedly instigated thereto by Savonarola and many others, had been several times on the point of taking the initiative in the matter. First of all, however, he wished to solemnly consult the Doctors of the Sorbonne as to his right to take this step, and they passed a vote in his favour on the 7th of January, 1497.[1] If all this had been insufficient to decide the vacillating temper of the King, who always hesitated on the brink of an enterprise, it was certainly enough to give strong encouragement to Savonarola and many others who considered a Council to be the sole means of remedying the evils harassing the Church, and avoiding the danger of schism. These

[1] *Vide* Raynald ad ann. 1492, § 2–5; Bercastel, "Storia del Cristianesimo," bk. lvi. § 42; Padre Marchese, "Storia del Convento di San Marco," in the "Scritti varii," p. 225 and fol. Theodorico Brie, in his "Storia del Concilio di Costanza," makes use of the following words: "Nam et beata Petri cathedra, ut nosti, plerumque pastore vacavit. Imo et ipsa eadem, quam et sponsam meam nomino, saepissime vacasti; nec propter hoc quisquam autumet, te non mansisse sponsam meam. Sufficeret namque unus justus, etsi omnes caeteri essent haeretici, ut et ego sponsus tuus semper et essem et remanerem" (*Vide* Rudelbach, op. cit., p. 32).

ideas were now regarded with still wider favour, as it became more generally known that they had the support of several members of the Sacred College, and notably of the Cardinal of San Pietro in Vincoli, who having been defeated at the last election by the Borgia's gold, was furious against him, and seemed destined to become his successor. Averse to half measures or compromises, he publicly declared the election of Pope Alexander VI. to be null and void, and stigmatised him as a heathen and a heretic. Many of the things he had said while a Cardinal, he afterwards reiterated when Pope, in his Bull of the 14th of January, 1505, in which he proclaimed that every election obtained by simony was void, and not to be rendered valid even by subsequent acts of homage from the Cardinals.

Savonarola neither knew nor foresaw that even Giuliano della Rovere and the other Cardinals adhering to his views were politicians who went with the times. Accordingly he deemed the way to be far better prepared for the proposed step than it really was. He had long and vainly waited for King Charles to take the initiative; but now time pressed, and delays were dangerous. Hence he resolved to throw down the glove and boldly face, singlehanded, the shock of the Borgia's wrath.

First, however, it was necessary to despatch his famous "Letters to the Princes," *i.e.*, to the sovereigns of France, Spain, England, Hungary, and Germany. These letters had long been prepared, and their contents were nearly identical.[1] "The moment of vengeance has arrived, the

[1] These "Lettere ai Principi" have been frequently reprinted, and some writers have sought to contest their authenticity. But this is established beyond doubt; for the Letters are found in very old and authentic codices, as, for instance, in the Riccardi Codex 2053, and in many others; they are mentioned by the old biographers in the depositions of the accused given farther on, spoken of in detail in the documents of Savonarola's trial, and alluded to in Frà Benedetto's "Vulnera Diligentis," and many other works of the period.

Lord commands me to reveal new secrets, and make manifest to the world the peril by which the bark of St. Peter is threatened, owing to your long neglect. The Church is all teeming with abomination, from the crown of her head to the soles of her feet; yet not only do ye apply no remedy, but ye do homage to the cause of the woes by which she is polluted. Wherefore, the Lord is greatly angered, and hath long left the Church without a shepherd. . . . Now, I hereby testify, *in verbo Domini*, that this Alexander be no Pope, nor can be held as one; inasmuch as, leaving aside the mortal sin of simony, by which he hath purchased the Papal Chair, and daily selleth the benefices of the Church to the highest bidder, and likewise putting aside his other manifest vices, I declare that he is no Christian, and believes in no God, the which surpasses the height of all infidelity." After this preamble, Savonarola proceeds to invite all the princes of Christendom to summon a Council with the utmost speed, in some *fit and free* place. On his side, he pledges himself to make good all his assertions, and not by force of argument alone, but promising that God would send signs and portents to attest the truth of his words. He then added a few expressions suited to the temper of the prince he was addressing, and best adapted to rouse him to action. Thus, he reminded the vain Maximilian of his dignity as an Emperor, saying that nothing could be more worthy of it than to rescue the Church from danger. To Ferdinand and Isabella he wrote: "Of what avail are your victories over the infidels? Ye raise an edifice without; while within, the foundations of the Church are giving way, and the whole building falling to ruin. He reminded King Charles of the numerous things he had so frequently predicted to him: "Thou canst not certes be ignorant of the many opportunities of well-doing vouchsafed thee by the Lord; wherefore, if thou shrink

from this holy enterprise, heavier chastisement will be inflicted on thee than on others. Remember that God hath already given thee the first sign of His wrath.[1] Thou that bearest the title of the Most Christian King, thou whom the Lord hath chosen and armed with the sword of His vengeance, wilt thou consent to the ruin of the Church? Canst thou be ignorant of the many and sore perils by which she is encompassed?"

Savonarola undoubtedly placed his chief reliance on King Charles: he was aware of that monarch's desire to reform the Church, and knew that he now thought of it with increasing favour, recent troubles having caused his mind to revert to the affairs of Italy and religion.[2] If he

[1] An Italian translation, by Frà Ignazio da Ferrara, of the letters to the King of Spain and the emperor, appeared in the miscellanea of Baluzio. Both were again published by Meier, together with the letter to the King of France in its original Latin. All were afterwards reprinted by Perrens, who supposed that he was the first to reproduce the last of the three. From imperfect examination of the depositions of witnesses, and of the documents of the trial, Meier gave them a wrong date. Those to the Kings of Hungary and England are missing, but they can have differed little from the others.

[2] This is confirmed by De Commines, who gives us a minute description of the actual state of mind of King Charles: "Si avoit son coeur tousjours de faire et accomplir le retour en Italie, et confessoit bien y avoir fait des fautes largement et les contoit." He then adds, that the king "avoit mis de nouveau son immagination de vouloir vivre selon les commandemens de Dieu, et mettre la justice en bon ordre et l'Eglise." And he had already used his best efforts to reform its abuses: "mais il êust, eu bien à faire, à ranger les gens d'Eglise" (bk. viii. chap. xxv.). Also, by a letter of Louis XII. to the Florentine Republic, dated 4th of June, 1498 (Desjardins, "Négociations," vol. ii. p. 13), it is plain that France had intended to undertake the reform of the Church.

As we have previously noted, Padre Marchese is of opinion that the Cardinal of San Piero in Vincoli had visited Savonarola, when passing through Florence in the wake of the French army, in order to moot even then the project of a Council. But Savonarola, when repeatedly questioned on this point during his trial, declared that he had never made any agreement with the Cardinal, although he had known him to be in favour of calling the Council: "I saw, and indeed knew San Piero in Vincoli to be disposed to the plan; because a certain Ser Cristofano, formerly a knight of the Court of Mirandola, came to me with a private

could once induce the king to take the step of calling the Council, he had every reason to hope that the whole of Christendom would come to his aid. All were weary of the abominations of Rome : France seemed always ready for action ; Germany and England were already stirred by the agitation that afterwards led to reform ; encouragement, therefore, was to be expected from all sides.

Nevertheless, before despatching his "Letters to the Princes," he showed them to certain trustworthy friends maintaining relations with the different European Courts, in order that they might at once send information of what was proposed, and warmly urge the convocation of the Council. Simone del Nero was to write to one of his brothers in Spain ; Domenico Mazzinghi to Giovanni Guasconi, the ambassador in France ; Francesco del Pugliese was to address the king of England through a friend ; Giovanni Cambi was to write to the Emperor, and a friend of the Convent in Ferrara to the sovereign of Hungary. Each of these persons was supplied with a draft of the letter he was charged to send, the which draft was written by Niccolò da Milano, who had acted as Savonarola's secretary for the last three years; while, together with their own communications, all were to send a copy of Savonarola's last letter to the Pope.[1] All these documents were on the way between the end of March and the first days of April. Thus, everything was prepared for the decisive and solemn proceedings, to which

letter from the said San Piero in Vincoli, and told me that, before another day was out, a squadron of Cardinals would come to Florence to meet in Council. But, forasmuch as I held him to be a liar and a turncoat, I gave him no definite reply."

[1] *Vide* in Appendix to the Italian edition, the documents of Savonarola's trial, and the depositions of Giovanni Cambi, Domenico Mazzinghi, and Simone del Nero. The latter states that he spontaneously added much praise of Savonarola to the letter he wrote from the draft supplied to him. *Vide* also the letters addressed to Niccolò del Nero and Giovacchino Guasconi, the Florentine ambassadors in France. (Appendix to the Italian edition, doc. xv.)

the speedy despatch of the "Lettere ai Principi" was to be the first step. But these letters were never sent.[1]

In the life of individuals as well as of nations, there comes a moment when the whole course of events is suddenly changed, and a hidden hand seems to turn all things to evil. In Savonarola's case this moment had undoubtedly come. He was anxiously expecting replies to the letters sent by his friends, and specially anxious to receive one from France, when suddenly the news came instead, that the messenger directed to the latter country had been robbed by a band of Milanese cut-throats, and that Mazzinghi's letter to the ambassador in France had unfortunately fallen into the hands of the Duke.[2] The haste with which Ludovico forwarded it to Cardinal Ascanio in Rome, the eagerness with which the latter presented it to the Pope, and the rage it excited in him, may be more easily imagined than described. At last the Borgia held in his hands a documentary proof of the audacity of the Friar, against whom all the potentates of Italy were arrayed, and whose enemies were already dominant in Florence. Thus, Savonarola was beleaguered and threatened

[1] This serves to explain why these letters have only been preserved in the shape of rough drafts without any date. *Vide* the Trial and the other prisoners' depositions.

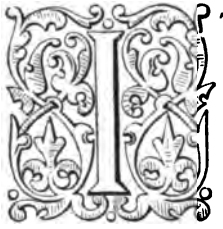
[2] At p. 132 of his "Nuovi Documenti," even Signor Gherardi seems to doubt the authenticity of these "Lettere ai Principi," from having found no mention of them in the ambassadors' despatches. But how could they be mentioned when the "Lettere ai Principi" were never sent off, and only privately announced? Both the author of the "Vita Latina" (at sheet 29) and Burlamacchi (at p. 86) state that the Duke of Milan had received intelligence of the letter to the French king. It is true they assign no date to the event, but both affirm that the letter seized by the Duke was from Savonarola. But from what we have already related, it is clear that the captured letter was the one from Mazzinghi to Guasconi. Besides, the ambassadors' silence is sufficiently explained by the circumstance that at this moment the events going on in Florence entirely changed the aspect of affairs, and deprived the letters of Savonarola and his friends of all importance, although a great point was repeatedly made of them during the Friar's trial.

on all sides, even before the final struggle began. Nevertheless, the course of events was so marvellously rapid, that he had no time to measure the enormity of these unexpected perils before, like a thunderbolt from heaven, another and still worse misfortune befell him.

# CHAPTER VII.

## *THE ORDEAL BY FIRE.*

(April 7, 1498.)



IT was one of those moments in which the popular aspect seems to undergo a magical change. Savonarola's adherents had either disappeared or were in hiding; all Florence now seemed against him. Messengers from Rome and Milan were continually coming and going. The spies of the Duke were on the alert, and wrote to their master that some great stroke was hourly expected on the part of the Signory.[1] In fact, it was well known that the Gonfalonier Popoleschi, and Berlinghieri, one of the Priors, were doing their utmost to effect a radical change in the Government.

[1] Paolo Somenzi, as we have seen, resided in Florence, and Giovanni Tranchedino in Bologna; they superintended the proceedings of many of the Duke's agents and adherents. During the months of March and April Somenzi supplied the Duke with detailed accounts of the numerous snares laid for Savonarola by the Arrabbiati, and assured him of the *good will* of the Signory, all of whom were hostile to the Friar. Tranchedino at Bologna continually wrote that he had received intelligence from Florence, "that some of the principal leaders who had hitherto ruled were in great agitation of mind; and either through this affair of the Friar, or from some other cause, within a few days some movement or tumult might be expected that would probably lead to a complete change of government" (Bologna, 20th of March, 1498). *Vide* Appendix to the Italian edition, doc. xii.

As if this were not enough, the public attention was stirred towards the end of March by a very strange and unexpected event. A certain Frà Francesco di Puglia, of the Order of St. Francis, now delivering the Lenten sermons in St. Croce, had begun to attack Savonarola with singular vehemence and pertinacity. He stigmatized him as a heretic, a schismatic, and a false prophet, and, not satisfied with this, challenged him to prove the truth of his doctrines by the ordeal by fire.[1] Similar challenges had been previously offered, but Savonarola had always treated them with merited contempt, believing it beneath his dignity to reply to them. But, as it now chanced, Frà Domenico considered himself to be personally challenged, because he was preaching in his master's stead, and also because, when at Prato the preceding year, the same friar had provoked his wrath by insulting words against Savonarola's doctrines. They had then agreed to hold a public discussion; but on the appointed day the Franciscan, notwithstanding that he was the aggressor and had even then proposed the ordeal by fire, hurried from the city, under pretext of having been summoned to Florence by his superiors.[2]

Accordingly, no sooner was Frà Domenico informed of the fresh provocation offered by the Franciscan, than he hastened to publish his "Conclusions," and declared that he would willingly go through the ordeal by fire since Savonarola must reserve himself for greater things.[3] As he was not one to shrink from his word, the affair had already become serious before Savonarola had time to

[1] Allusion has been already made elsewhere to the challenge offered by a preacher of Santo Spirito.

[2] "Vita Latina," at sheet 47; Burlamacchi, p. 118.

[3] Burlamacchi, p. 119; "Vita Latina," sheet 47[t]. Both these authorities fix the date of the challenge on the 6th of March, but this is a blunder, for the event must have necessarily taken place later in the month.

think of preventing it. But when the Franciscan saw that Frà Domenico was in earnest, he instantly sought a pretext to draw back. He went about repeating that "his quarrel was with Savonarola alone, and that although he expected to be consumed, he was ready to enter the fire with him in order to procure the destruction of that disseminator of scandal and false doctrine, but would have nothing to do with Frà Domenico."[1] This wretched affair might have well ended here, for Savonarola severely reproved Frà Domenico's superfluous zeal,[2] and the Franciscan was only too glad to seize a chance of escape. But, on the contrary, just when the contest seemed on the point of dying out, it suddenly burst forth afresh.

The Compagnacci were gathered together at one of their accustomed banquets. Dressed in silken attire, and feasting on delicate viands and excellent wines, they consulted on the matter, and decided to do their utmost to bring the ordeal to pass. "If Savonarola enters the fire," they said, "he will undoubtedly be burnt; if he refuses to enter it, he will lose all credit with his followers; we shall have an opportunity of rousing a tumult, and during the tumult shall be able to seize on his person." Some of them, indeed, hoped to have a chance of killing

[1] It has been asserted by some writers that the challenge was first given by Savonarola, but this is absolutely untrue. The history of this ordeal by fire has been misrepresented by all modern and most of the old writers. We believe that we have finally succeeded in disentangling the real facts of the case by consulting the "Vita Latina," Burlamacchi, Pico, Nardi, Cambi, &c.; but, above all, the second book of Frà Benedetto's "Vulnera Diligentis," and the "Giornate," iii. and iv. of Lorenzo Violi. Both these men were eye-witnesses of the scene, and their testimony must therefore be considered worthy of credence. By the aid of their writings and original documents we are enabled to throw fresh light on this hitherto obscure episode of Savonarola's career. *Vide* Appendix to the Italian edition, docs. xvi. and xvii.

[2] According to the printed version of the Trial, Savonarola openly avowed that he did his utmost to restrain Frà Domenico; and adds that, had he been allowed to preach, he would have shown that the truth of his "Conclusions" could be proved by different means.

him.[1] They accordingly applied to the Signory and found its members perfectly willing not only to help, but even to assume the direction of their shameful plot.[2] For they caused the disputed "Conclusions" [3] to be transcribed by the Government notary, and publicly invited the signatures of all who wished to maintain or contest them by the ordeal of fire.

It was truly monstrous that the chief authorities of the State should take so active a part in this affair; but no scruples withheld them from seeking to achieve their design. Nor was it difficult of achievement, for Frà Domenico was no longer to be kept in check by any power on earth, and instantly appending his name to the document, almost prayed to be allowed to go through the ordeal.[4] But it proved very difficult to induce the Franciscan, who had first started the scandalous business, to do the same. He presented himself to the Signory

[1] *Vide* Burlamacchi and Cerretani. The latter chronicler gives a detailed account of the banquets held by the Compagnacci.

[2] The evidence of Violi and Frà Benedetto proves that the ordeal by fire was undoubtedly desired and contrived by the Compagnacci and the Signory. Frà Benedetto concludes with these words: "And it was their purpose, by this device, to place Frà Hieronimo in a position to be easily killed by his adversaries before the close of the trial, or rather before there should be time for a miracle to take effect, *et tamen*, that they might be able to feign ignorance and innocence" ("Vulnera Diligentis," bk. ii. chap. ix.). And Violi plainly says that the Compagnacci had arranged "with the Barefooted Friars, who were adversaries (of Savonarola) from envy, that one of their community, named Frà Francesco della Puglia, should preach against the doctrines of Frà Hieronimo; and therefore they had sent him to Santa Croce to preach in public, and say, &c." ("Giornata," iii.). *Vide* Appendix to the Italian edition, docs. xvi. and xvii.

[3] The "Conclusions," which have been often published, are these: "Ecclesia Dei indiget renovatione; flagellabitur, renovabitur. Florentia, quoque, post flagella renovabitur et prosperabitur. Infideles convertentur ad Christum. Haec, autem omnia erunt temporibus nostris. Excommunicatio nuper lata contra Rev. Patrem nostrum fratrem Hieronymum, nulla est. Non observantes eam, non peccant." *Vide* Padre Marchese, "Documenti," doc. xxiv.

[4] *Vide* Padre Marchese, doc. xxiv.; and Lupi, doc. vi.

on the 28th of March, with another written declaration to the effect that—"although aware of his inferiority to Frà Girolamo in doctrine and goodness, he was ready to go through the fire with him; but that with Frà Domenico he had no concern." He would present some one else to pass the ordeal with the latter, and, in fact, he proposed Frà Giuliano Rondinelli, who did not appear, however, at the Palace.[1] Then it was whispered about that in no case would they enter the fire; that it was only intended to burn a few friars of St. Mark's in order to crush Savonarola, and that if this plan failed, some way would be found to quash the affair altogether.[2] These assurances were given by the Signory as well as by the Compagnacci. All that could be settled after much insistence was that the Franciscan should sign a declaration to the effect that he would pass through the fire with Frà Girolamo, if the latter wished to make the trial, and expressly adding that this was done *at the desire and request of the Magnificent Signory*.[3] As regarded going

[1] *Vide* Appendix to the Italian edition, doc. xviii.

[2] Burlamacchi speaks at p. 133 of the assurances given to the Minorites: "And, in fact, it was promised to them that they should in no wise have to enter (the fire). Forasmuch as a few days before, there had been a supper at the Pitti Palace, whereat the chief enemies of the Friar were present; and it was here settled by them that the Minorites should not enter the fire, and that it would be enough for them that the friars of St. Mark's should appear in the Piazza, and Frà Domenico, whom they nicknamed the Fattoraccio (Bad Steward), be the only one to enter the fire." Violi ("Giornata," iii.) writes: "They egged on our Florentine, Frà Giuliano Rondinelli, a man rather of scant judgment than of much prudence, and whom our malicious Florentines found easier to work upon than the aforesaid Pugliese. . . . The Compagnacci and their leader, Doffo Spini, had promised this man that the trial by fire would not be made unless it suited them to allow it; and that it would be enough for this Friar Rondinelli to declare himself ready to enter the fire, but that, in fact and truth, he would not be required to do so." *Vide* Appendix to the Italian edition, docs. xvi. and xvii.

[3] "Ad instantiam et requisitionem Dominorum Florentinorum." So it is expressed in the instrument drawn up in the presence of the Signory, and published by Meier from the MS. in the "Achivio delle Rifor-

through the ordeal with Frà Domenico, it was only on the 30th of March, and with great reluctance, that Rondinelli could be persuaded to sign the challenge; even then he added the explicit avowal "that he would enter the fire, although certain that he should be burnt; and only for his soul's salvation." This wretched monk was a mere tool in the hands of the savage Compagnacci and the crafty Franciscan. Thus the Signory of Florence shamelessly agreed to organize an affair that was a degradation to the dignity of their office, and could only result in the shedding of innocent blood and the gravest danger to the Republic.[1]

The matter had gone so far, that on the same day (30th of March) a numerous Pratica was assembled to discuss

magioni"; which had been already published during Savonarola's life. *Vide* also Padre Marchese, doc. xxiv.

As to the arguments employed to induce the Franciscan to face the ordeal, we find them repeatedly mentioned in Frà Benedetto's and Violi's works. Violi relates that Doffo Spini and many other idle fellows were accustomed to congregate in Simone Botticelli's workshop, "and while talking there on the subject of the Friar's death, Doffo Spini frequently said that they never meant to make the Franciscan go through the fire, and had given him their assurance to that effect; it was enough for them if he would keep up the game long enough for them to carry out their intent of putting an end to this business of the Friar." Violi had read this in the now perished chronicle of Simone Botticelli. *Vide* Appendix to the Italian edition, doc. xvi. Pico believes that the first suggestion of the plot came from Rome, "Pontificis pollicitationibus, ut creditum est" (chap. xv.). It is certain that the Arrabbiati and the Pope were in close and continual correspondence just then.

[1] On the 28th of March, 1498, Girolamo Benivieni wrote a letter to the priest of Cascina relating how the challenge to the ordeal by fire had proceeded from the preacher at Sta Croce, but how he had speedily withdrawn it, on finding that Frà Domenico was ready to accept it: "*Ipse nunc, fugam querit*, and says that he will not go through this ordeal, *nisi cum Frate Hieronymo.*" Benivieni then adds: "The affair is in the hands of the Signory, and already many other persons are offering to enter the fire, with as much enthusiasm as if they were asked to a wedding." Nevertheless, he concludes, "I believe the affair will end in smoke, although it is urgently pushed on by those of St. Mark's, and by the endeavours (*et per la viâ*) of the Archbishop's Vicar and of the Signory." *Vide* Gherardi, "Nuovi Documenti," 2nd ed., p. 216.

the question of the ordeal by fire. Some of those present seemed heartily disgusted with the proceedings of the Signory; but the majority shared the views of Carlo Canigiani, who said: "That this was a Church affair, rather to be discussed in Rome where saints are canonized than in this palace, where it is fitter to treat of war and finance. Nevertheless, if it be really desired that the trial by fire should take place, let us at least consider whether it will be likely to crush discord or not." The same indifference was shown by other speakers, who all concluded by saying that everything must be referred to the Pope or the Vicar. Girolamo Rucellai said, in addition: "It seems to me that too much noise is made about this trial by fire; the only important point to us is to be rid of friars and non-friars, Arrabbiati and non-Arrabbiati, and to try to keep the citizens at peace. Nevertheless if it be deemed that this trial will restore concord in the city, let them go not only into the fire, but into the water, up in the air or down into the earth; meanwhile let our care be for the city, not for these monks." In real truth all were inclined for the ordeal, and Filippo Giugni, turning the whole thing into ridicule, cynically remarked: "To me, fire seems a strange thing, and I should be very unwilling to pass through it. A trial by water would be less dangerous, and if Frà Girolamo went through it without getting wet, I would certainly join in asking his pardon." And the gist of his speech was, that it would be best to be well rid of the Friar by consigning him without delay to the Pope. Giovanni Canacci, on the other hand, although likewise opposed to Savonarola, rose in great agitation, and almost with tears in his eyes, exclaimed: "When I hear such things as these said, I scarcely know whether life or death is most to be desired. I truly believe that if our forefathers, the founders of this city, could have divined that a like question would ever be discussed

here, and that we were to become the jest and opprobrium of the whole world, they would have indignantly refused to have anything to do with us. And now our city is come to a worse pass than for many long years; and one sees that it is all in confusion. Wherefore I would implore your Excellencies to deliver our people from all this wretchedness at any cost, either by fire, air, water, or any means you choose. *Iterum:* I pray your Excellencies to put an end to these things in order that no misery nor hurt may befall our city." [1] The rest of the speakers all agreed in one way or another that the ordeal should take place. It was truly an afflicting sight to see the inhabitants of the most cultured and civilized city in the world assembled at their rulers' command to seriously discuss the advisability of lighting so barbarous a pyre. And it was still more afflicting to find that all were in favour of the ordeal, merely for the sake of concluding the affair, and without even the excuse of any genuine religious fanaticism.

The same evening the ordeal was decided upon with the utmost speed. Savonarola was to be exiled if one of the Dominicans should perish, and Frà Francesco, if one of the Minorites. It was also shamelessly decreed that in case both the champions were consumed, the Dominicans alone should be punished. But if the ordeal

[1] Only a very imperfect summary has been preserved of this lengthy discussion. Of the first speeches we have only given a hasty sketch, but have reported Canacci's words almost as they stand in the text ("Florentine Archives," cl. ii. series 5, file 131. Also "Consulte e Pratiche," cod. 66, p. 161). The latter collection has been published in full by Signor Lupi. In Nerli's "Commentarii," bk. iv., we find Canacci's words reported as follows: "That it would be sufficient, in order not to expose the two friars to the peril of being burnt in the fire, to throw them into a tub of water, even of tepid water, that the shock might be slighter; and if they came forth dry, they would have performed a supernatural miracle." Canacci, however, was more disposed to tears than to mirth; it was Giugni who laughed. Nerli has thus jumbled both speeches in one.

should not take place, the party who prevented it would be exiled, or both parties, if both were equally unwilling to face it.[1] Accordingly, the trial by fire was no longer to be evaded, and the Signory, after first abetting, now almost insisted upon it. The Pope was entirely with them in the matter, but in his official communications, through Bonsi, with the Ten, whom he knew to be Savonarola's friends, he refused his consent to the ordeal, and even feigned to disapprove of it. Nor was he altogether insincere, for it was only natural that he should hesitate, in the impossibility, at that distance, of foretelling the final result.[2] Savonarola, meanwhile, was inflamed with indignation against these foes whose diabolical plots and party-passions were disguised under a semblance of religious zeal. He was also persuaded that the Minorite friars would never have the courage to pass through the fire, for he knew that they were reluctantly obeying the suggestions

[1] *Vide* Appendix to the Italian edition, doc. xviii. The decree threatened exile to Savonarola and Frà Domenico on the one side, to Frà Francesco and Frà Lorenzo Corsi on the other, it being still uncertain who the champions would be.

[2] The very mild protests of the Pope prove nothing to us. It was impossible for him to give his official support to a trial undertaken for the purpose of deciding whether his Brief of excommunication were valid or invalid, and whether the Church were in need of reform. But, on the other hand, what might not be the consequence if either the Franciscan or both the friars should be burnt? Nevertheless, had Alexander really objected to the ordeal, he could have instantly prevented it, by ordering the Franciscans to withdraw their challenge. Bonsi had actually suggested that the Pope should fulfil his promise of absolving Savonarola from excommunication, and thus prevent the experiment. But the Pope refused to do this (Gherardi, "Nuovi Documenti," p. 134 and fol.). And it has been ascertained from the documents of Savonarola's trial that the Archbishop's vicar was one of the hottest instigators of the projected ordeal; and that after the event the Pope was most delighted, and showered praises and favours on the Florentines (Gherardi, loc. cit., and G. F. Pico, "Vita," &c., chap. xv.). Burlamacchi states (p. 123) that the Pope feigned to object to it, fearing "that if the thing succeeded he might lose the triple crown;" but that his letter reached Florence too late. The same is said in the "Vita Latina," sheet 48t. We cannot discover that this letter arrived at all, and do not believe that it was ever despatched.

of the Arrabbiati. He desired, and in truth did his utmost, to prevent the experiment, and discerned that he would have a better chance of succeeding if one of his disciples came forward in his stead. Most certainly, had Savonarola presented himself as champion, his enemies would have done all in their power to have him burnt, either alone or at the price of another innocent life. Nevertheless—such are the contradictions of the human mind—he had a secret belief, that if the trial were really made, it would end triumphantly for him, and, accordingly, did not put forth all his energy to prevent it. He told himself that Frà Domenico's daring ardour must undoubtedly be inspired by God. In fact, according to his theories, it was neither strange nor difficult to conceive that the Lord would perform a miracle in order to confound the Arrabbiati and establish the truth of the new doctrine.[1] He had frequently declared to the people that his words would be confirmed by supernatural evidence :[2] the moment for this seemed at hand, hence the general and almost frantic eagerness to witness the result of the ordeal. The Piagnoni were even more anxious for it than the rest, for they hoped and believed that when the crisis came their Master would be unable to refrain from entering the fire himself, and that a miracle would be accomplished.[3]

Nothing else was spoken of in Florence, and although Savonarola disapproved of the trial, and opposed it as far

[1] *Vide* one of Savonarola's discourses, of which mention is made farther on.

[2] This was also repeated in his letters to the princes.

[3] *Vide* in the "Florence Archives" the Records of the Medici before they became the reigning House. File 69 contains letters from Leonardo Strozzi to the parish priest of Cascina, of which some passages have been already published by Mons. Perrens (vol. i., Appendix, p. 492). One of these letters, dated 5th of April, 1498 (c. 18), contains these words : "I know that a thousand rumours will have reached you, and that you will be anxious to know the truth ; I mean concerning this affair of the Friar, for hardly anything else is spoken of."

as was possible, he secretly exulted in Frà Domenico's zeal, almost rejoicing to see how all things combined to render the ordeal an absolute necessity. Besides, there were the visions of Frà Silvestro, who declared that he had beheld the guardian angels of Frà Girolamo and Frà Domenico, and been assured by them that the latter would go through the flames unhurt.[1] We also know Savonarola's blind faith in Silvestro's visions. All this, joined to Frà Domenico's genuine enthusiasm, which was communicated to others with almost lightning speed, stirred the monks of St. Mark's and their friends to the highest pitch of excitement. On the 1st of April Savonarola summoned his trustiest adherents to St. Mark's, and preached them a short sermon, in which he described the real state of affairs, whereupon his hearers declared with one voice their readiness to enter the fire.[2] Two days later, in fact, the friars addressed a letter to the Pope, saying that about three hundred of their number, and many laymen, were prepared to pass through the fire in defence of their Master's doctrines.[3] Accordingly, being thus pressed on all sides, Savonarola sent in the list of their names to the Signory, with a declaration to the effect that he would depute one of his monks to meet every Minorite brother who came forward, and adding that if the trial should really take place, he was persuaded that it would result in the triumph of his followers.[4]

At the same time he brought out a printed exposition of his theories—that was practically a reply to the accusations

[1] This was proved by the documents of Savonarola's and Frà Domenico's trials.

[2] Burlamacchi, p. 124, and the "Vita Latina," at sheet 49.

[3] *Vide* the letter dated 3rd of April at p. 137 of Gherardi's "Nuovi Documenti." The friars state that not only they, *pene trecenti*, but also a great number of the people, *numerosa populi caterva utriusque sexus*, were ready to pass the ordeal.

[4] *Vide* the "Vita Latina," Burlamacchi, and the pamphlet quoted farther on.

which were then being heaped upon him. In this he said: "I have too great a work on hand to stoop to join in these wretched disputes. If the adversaries who first provoked us, and then sought a thousand excuses, would publicly bind themselves to put to the issue by this test the decision of our cause and of the reform of the Church, I would no longer hesitate to enter the fire, and should feel assured of passing through it unharmed. But if it be their intent to prove by fire the validity of the sentence of excommunication, let them rather reply to the arguments we have brought forward. Would they, perhaps, combat our prophecies by fire? Yet we neither compel nor exhort any man to believe in them more than he feel able. We only exhort all to lead righteous lives, and for this the fire of charity and the miracle of faith are required; all the rest is of no avail. Our adversaries, by whom this thing has been instigated, declare that they will assuredly perish, thereby confessing that they are their own murderers. We, on the contrary, have been provoked to this trial and forced to accept it, because the honour of God and of religion is at stake. Those who feel truly inspired by the Lord will certainly issue unhurt from the flames, if the experiment should verily take place, of which we are by no means assured. As to me, I reserve myself for a greater work, for which I shall ever be ready to lay down my life. The time will come when the Lord shall vouchsafe supernatural signs and tokens; but this certainly cannot be at the command or at the pleasure of man. For the present let it suffice ye to see that, by sending some of our brethren, we shall be equally exposed to the wrath of the people in case the Lord should not allow them to pass through the fire unhurt." [1]

[1] "Risposta di Frate Hieronimo . . . a certe obiectioni facte circa lo experimento dello entrare nel fuoco per la verità da lui predicata." It was published, without date, during Savonarola's life, together with the con-

Frà Domenico's[1] enthusiasm was beginning to convince not only Savonarola himself, but even the most distrustful, that God had really appointed him to this work. Men's minds were increasingly inflamed. Piagnoni and Arrabbiati awaited the day of the trial with equal anxiety, though for different ends. Men, women, and children continued to propose themselves as champions; and although, in many cases, this was empty bravado, others came forward in all sincerity. On the 2nd of April Frà Malatesta Sacramoro and Frà Roberto Salviati went to subscribe their names as champions of St. Mark's, alleging that they too had received a call from the Lord. Thereupon, to ensure greater publicity, the convention was officially given to the world in print, with all the signatures of the opposing factions.[2] The Ten, hitherto invariably well-disposed to Savonarola, sent these papers to Rome, with a full and exact account of all that had occurred, and again requested the Pontiff's consent to the ordeal, which, in appearance at least, he still disapproved.[3]

Finally the 6th of April was fixed for this singular contest. Frà Domenico and Frà Giuliano Rondinelli were the two champions chosen by common accord. For many days past the doors of St. Mark's had been closed, and the brethren absorbed in continual prayer. On the evening of the 5th, however, they received a message from the Signory to the effect that the trial was postponed to the

tract signed by those who had volunteered to enter the fire, the whole forming a pamphlet entitled, "Conclusiones rationibus ac signes supernaturalibus probande." Undated. The autograph draft of the "Risposta" is in the codex of San Marco, sheet 168. *Vide* also the documents of the Trial in the Appendix to the Italian edition.

[1] *Vide* the before-quoted documents of Savonarola's trial.

[2] In one of the letters we have quoted from Leonardo Strozzi to the parish priest of Cascina (dated 5th of March, but evidently in mistake for the 5th of April), we find these words: "A reprint has been brought out to-day of the same Conclusions (*sic*), with the signatures of those friars added on to them," &c. (File 69, sheet 19).

[3] *Vide* the letter of the Ten, in Padre Marchese, loc. cit.; doc. xxiv.

7th of April. The cause of this change was unknown; but some said that the Signory was awaiting a prohibitory Brief from Rome [1] in order to have an excuse for putting a stop to the whole thing. The Government, in fact, was already beginning to hesitate, fearing to have gone too far. For it had never anticipated finding so much resolution in the monks of St. Mark's, or so much poltroonery in the Minorites, who now insisted that some pledges should be given them as to the manner in which they were to pass through the fire unscathed. Accordingly, on the following day, 6th of April, a new decree was issued to modify that of the 30th of March, proclaiming that, "In the event of Frà Domenico being consumed, Frà Girolamo is to quit the Florentine territory within the space of three hours. . . ." [2] No allusion was made to the Minorite friars since it was intended in any case to ensure their safety, and especially since Rondinelli had declared his conviction that he should perish if he entered the fire. On the same day Savonarola delivered another brief

[1] Another of Strozzi's letters to the priest of Cascina, dated 6th of April, 1498, runs as follows: "I believe we may expect that a Brief or some other hindrance will come to us from Rome: on the part of those men [*i.e., of the friars of St. Mark*] all was and is arranged; and if it [the trial] takes place, which I can scarce believe now, their arrangements will be as fine a sight as a miracle. Frà Jeronimo preached this morning in St. Mark's, and again earnestly proffered, or rather promised, a most evident miracle, and replied to the numerous objections which are, or might be made, and above all to those who pretend to say that this miracle will be wrought by diabolical aid or by magic arts, for which this would be a fine opportunity; and that even if this miracle should not be done now (although they be prepared for it) others will be speedily performed; and, if not before, certainly without fail after the turning of the key. The which will soon come about, and great and marvellous things be declared." *Vide* the letter in the aforesaid File 69 of the Medici Archives, at sheet 20, published by Perrens, vol. i., Appendix, p. 493. The same things are confirmed in the "Vita Latina" at sheet 48; and in Burlamacchi, p. 123.

[2] Florence Archives. "Deliberazioni dei Signori e Collegi." Register 100, sheet 33t. This deliberation is entitled, "Contra fratrem Hieronymum." *Vide* Appendix, doc. xviii.

address, warmly exhorting all the faithful to be instant in prayer.

The 7th of April came, but not the expected Brief from Rome;[1] and all Florence was panting for the novel sight that, as it now seemed, must inevitably take place. Everything was prepared for it, and every one hoped to make it serve his own ends: the Compagnacci and Arrabbiati sought an opportunity for despatching the Friar; the Minorites to find some excuse for escaping the danger; the Signory were ready to favour any plan that might be hurtful to Savonarola; and the Piagnoni hoped that the ordeal would establish their triumph. Thus, public passions being more and more heated, the two parties decided to come to the Piazza with armed escorts in order to secure their safety in the event of a riot.[2] Even the Signory were extremely uneasy, and after ordering the platform to be constructed, took every kind of precaution as if in dread of a revolt. Only three inlets to the Piazza were to be left open, and these guarded by armed men; no citizen was to come armed, and neither women nor children were to be admitted. The palace was filled with the Friar's adversaries, the city gates were to be kept closed, and the troops, stationed in different parts of the territory, prohibited under pain of death from leaving their posts, save by express command of the Signory, and bidden to obey no orders to the contrary even from the Ten.[3] Further,

[1] We have already said that, according to the "Vita Latina" (sheet 49[t]) and Burlamacchi (p. 123), this Brief was despatched subsequently to the event; but that we have not discovered it, and cannot believe that it was ever sent at all. It was entirely fictitious.

[2] Burlamacchi, p. 130: "Inasmuch as it was well known that the adversaries fully intended to make an end of the Father Frà Girolamo in the Piazza!" And Frà Benedetto states ("Vulnera Diligentis," bk. ii. chap. ix.) that they meant to stir up some extravagant dispute among the people, so that a riot might ensue, and then, during this disturbance, the adverse party would be able to kill Frà Hieronymo and some of his faithful disciples.

[3] *Vide* one of Somenzi's letters (7th of April, 1498) given in Del Lungo's work, loc. cit., doc. xxxix.

to prevent either of the two parties from disturbing the peace on the Piazza, Francesco Gualterotti and Giovan Battista Ridolfi were charged to keep watch over the friars of St. Mark's, Piero degli Alberti and Tommaso Antinori over the Minorites.[1] And Savonarola was so distrustful of his adversaries' good faith that, on the morning of the appointed day, he sent Francesco Davanzati to the palace to implore the Ten, who still remained faithful to him, to take measures to prevent either of the champions from shirking the ordeal and leaving his competitor alone in the flames. He therefore requested that the pyre should be lighted on the one side, while the friars entered it from the other, and that the torch should then be applied to close the way behind them.[2] He likewise entreated that the ordeal might take place before the dinner-hour, so that the minds of his followers might be clear and unobscured.[3] While the final preparations were being made on the Piazza, he celebrated high mass in St. Mark's, afterwards delivered a short discourse to the assembled people, and even now at the last hour was unable to conceal his doubts. "I cannot assure ye that the trial will be made, since the matter depends in no wise on ourselves; but this I can tell ye, that if it really take place, victory will certainly be on our side. O Lord, we felt in no need of miraculous proofs in order to believe the truth; but we have been provoked to this trial, and could not fail to stand up for our honour. We are certain that the evil one will not be able to turn this thing to the hurt of Thy honour or against Thy will, wherefore we go forth to

[1] Frà Benedetto, "Vulnera Diligentis." *Vide* Appendix to the Italian edition, doc. xvii.

[2] *Vide* among the depositions or examinations of the accused, the evidence given by Francesco Davanzati.

[3] Savonarola's own words, in the discourse mentioned farther on, are as follows: "They wished the affair to take place at the 20th hour" (*i.e.*, in the afternoon), "but I refused in order that the friars might be sober-minded."

combat for Thee; but our adversaries worship another God, inasmuch as their works are too diverse from ours. O Lord, this people desires nought save to serve Thee. Wilt thou serve the Lord, O my people?"[1] Hereupon all signified their assent in a loud voice. Savonarola then recommended his male hearers to offer up prayers in the Church, while he prepared his friars to march to the Piazza, and the women to remain in fervent devotion until the ordeal was over. At that moment the mace-bearers of the Signory came to announce that all was in readiness, and the friars of St. Mark's immediately set forth in procession.[2]

They marched slowly, two and two, numbering about two hundred in all, and with a crucifix borne aloft in front. Frà Domenico followed, arrayed in a cope of fiery red velvet, and bearing a great cross in his hand. He was accompanied by a deacon and sub-deacon; his head was erect, his countenance calm. After him came Savonarola, carrying the Host with Frà Francesco Salviati on one side, and Frà Malatesta Sacramoro on the other. Behind them marched a great multitude of people bearing lighted torches, and chanting the Psalm: *Exurgat Deus et dissipentur inimici eius.*[3] On nearing the Piazza, towards the 21st hour of the day,[4] they passed two by two between the armed men guarding the ends of the streets; and directly they appeared among the crowd already awaiting them on the Piazza, all joined in their

[1] "Esortazione fatta al popolo in San Marco il di 7 Aprile, 1498." It is given at the end of the Sermons on Exodus.

[2] "Esortazione," ea.; Burlamacchi, p. 129.

[3] "Vita Latina," sheet 50ᵗ and fol.; Burlamacchi, p. 129 and fol. *Vide* also in Appendix to the Italian edition (docs. xvi. and xvii.) the accounts given by Violi, who was with Savonarola at the time, and by Frà Benedetto, who describes the ordeal at length in chaps. vi.–x., bk. ii. of the "Vulnera Diligentis."

[4] Nardi says: "towards the 18th hour"; but we follow the accounts of Violi, who was actually present.

chants with such tremendous vigour as almost to shake the earth.[1] There was an innumerable throng; it seemed as though all the inhabitants of the city were gathered together; all the windows of the houses round the Square, all balconies and roofs were crowded with spectators; many children were clinging to railings, or perched upon columns and statues, in order to see the sight; some were even hanging from the walls, and had occupied their posts since the break of day.

The Loggia[2] of the Signory had been divided in two by a partition: the Minorites occupied the half nearest the palace; while the Dominicans were stationed round a little altar that had been erected in the other.[3] Having placed the Sacrament on this altar, Frà Domenico knelt before it, absorbed in prayer; while his companions stood about him in silence. A guard of three hundred infantry was drawn up in front of the Loggia, under the command of Marcuccio Salviati, composed of valiant soldiers, all staunch adherents of the Convent of St. Mark's.[4] But under the Tetto de' Pisani several hundred of the Compagnacci stood at arms, with Doffo Spini at their head; and in front, and about the palace were five hundred of the Signory's guards, commanded by Giovacchino della Vecchia, in addition to the soldiers posted at the openings of the streets.[5] Thus the Piazza was held by about a thousand men, prepared to attack Savonarola at a moment's notice; yet he contemplated his dangerous position with the utmost serenity, and quietly turned his eyes towards the platform already piled with bundles of

[1] Burlamacchi, p. 130.

[2] Now known as the Loggia dei Lanzi, and also as the Loggia dell' Orgagna.

[3] Burlamacchi, p. 130; Violi's and Frà Benedetto's accounts in the Appendix to the Italian edition, docs. xvi. and xvii.

[4] Now long destroyed, and its site occupied by a private house. It stands at right angles with the Loggia dei Lanzi.

[5] *Vide* Burlamacchi, Violi, and Frà Benedetto.

wood. This strange erection was about eighty feet in length, and projected across the Piazza from the Marzocco[1] in the direction of the Tetto de' Pisani.[2] It was about ten feet wide at the base, two and a half in height, and covered with earth and bricks. On this substratum the combustibles—wood, gunpowder, oil, pitch, and resin, were stacked in two banks, with a space, about two feet wide, left between for the passage of the rival champions.[3] All was prepared; the friars had only to come forth, and the torch would be laid to the pile. Up to this moment Savonarola had temporized and done his best to prevent the ordeal, while the Minorites, on the contrary, had dared him to it, and hurried it on; but in sight of the pile ready to be fired, the *rôles* were exchanged. Stirred by the presence of the crowd, the solemn chants of his friars, and the truly heroic enthusiasm of Frà Domenico, who, after earnest prayer, showed the utmost eagerness to enter the flames, Savonarola was now firmly convinced that the Lord would come to his disciple's aid, and accordingly desired to end all delay. But neither Francesco di Puglia, who had challenged the ordeal, nor Giuliano Rondinelli, who was to face it, had as yet appeared under the Loggia, but were tarrying in the palace, in secret debate with the Signory. The latter, instead of coming down to the Ringhiera, to witness the solemn drama that was shortly to begin, continued their discussions, and were apparently uncertain what course to adopt. And while all were waiting for the Minorite, and for the signal from the Signory, the members of the

[1] *I.e.*, the marble lion, then standing on the doorsteps of the palace, now replaced by one of bronze, made from a cast of the original, which was transported elsewhere.

[2] The Tetto de' Pisani was opposite the palace, and in modern times served as a post office, until pulled down, about twenty years ago, to make room for Palazzo Lawison.

[3] Burlamacchi, Violi, Frà Benedetto.

Government shamelessly sent to ask the Dominicans why they did not begin. Frà Domenico trembled with rage, and Savonarola replied that the Signory would do well to hurry the matter on, and no longer to keep the people in suspense.[1]

Then, the Minorites, being driven to the wall, began to put forth numerous pretexts for delay. With the aid of Piero degli Alberti, a bitter enemy to Savonarola, and deputed to preside over the ordeal, they caused it to be noised about that as Savonarola might have cast a magic spell over Domenico's red cope, that vestment must consequently be removed. The champion and his master both replied that a written contract had been made and subscribed, to prevent all disputes; that they had no belief in spells, and would leave their opponents to resort to them. Nevertheless, the demand was so strenuously urged, that Frà Domenico yielded to it, and removed his cope. Thereupon, the Minorites alleged fresh pretexts, declaring that the friar's robes might likewise be enchanted; and again Frà Domenico gave way, and showed his readiness to exchange clothes with any one of his companions. He was accordingly led into the palace, and after being entirely stripped, was clad in the robes of the Dominican brother, Alessandro Strozzi.[2] On returning to the Piazza he was next forbidden to stand near Savonarola, lest the latter might re-enchant him; and by his Prior's request, Frà Domenico submitted to being surrounded by the Minorites.[3] During this crisis, his patience equalled his courage; and in his great yearning to pass through the fire, he was ready to concede every point.

[1] *Vide* the writers before quoted, and the documents of Frà Domenico's trial.

[2] Burlamacchi and Viola relate that when Strozzi was sent for, he believed that he too would have to enter the flames; and accordingly showed signs of great joy, and craved Savonarola's blessing.

[3] Frà Benedetto, Burlamacchi, and Violi.

Nevertheless, the champion of the opposite party still lingered in the palace with Francesco da Puglia, and had not yet appeared.[1] Savonarola was already becoming uneasy at this; and his suspicions were increased by the consultation going on between the citizens and the Minorites, and the manifest favour shown to the latter. The persons appointed to preside over the trial invariably sided with those friars, and let them do as they pleased; accordingly, Savonarola sent another pressing message to the palace in order to put an end to the suspense. But at the same moment, the two Minorites asked and obtained another private interview with the Signory. What passed between them is unknown, but it now became increasingly evident that the whole business of the ordeal was no more than a cunningly arranged trick to entrap Savonarola and the community of St. Mark's.[2]

The patience of the multitude was now coming to an end. All had been assembled in the Piazza for many hours; the greater part of them were fasting since the dawn, and almost infuriated by the weariness of fruitless expectation. Hoarse murmurs arose on every side, followed by seditious cries; and the Arrabbiati, who had been eagerly watching for this moment, instantly tried to profit by it. A groom in the service of Giovanni Manetti succeeded in exciting a riot, and suddenly all the Piazza was in a tumult. Many of the outlets being closed, the people found themselves surrounded and hedged in; and accordingly made a rush for the palace. This seems to have been the moment fixed by the Arrabbiati for laying violent hands on the Friar, and making an end of him on the spot. They attempted to do so, in fact; but Salviati concentrated his men in front of the Loggia, and

[1] Frà Benedetto, op. cit.

[2] Frà Benedetto and Violi relate these particulars with great minuteness, and Burlamacchi gives a shorter account of them at p. 133 and fol.

tracing a line on the ground with his sword, exclaimed: "Whoever dares to cross this line shall taste the steel of Marcuccio Salviati;" and so resolute was his tone that no one dared to press forward.[1] At the same time, as it chanced, the foreign troops of the Signory, bewildered by the suddenness of the tumult, and seeing the people surging towards the palace,[2] energetically drove them back.

Thereupon, order being apparently restored, the people were quieted, and more eager than before to witness the ordeal; but the Signory were increasingly perplexed. Then came a tremendous storm shower with thunder and lightning; so that many thought this would naturally put a stop to everything.[3] But in their thirst for the promised spectacle, the people never stirred; the rain ceased as suddenly as it had begun, and all remained in the same state of uncertainty. The Minorite friar was still invisible; and his companions began to raise fresh objections. They insisted that Frà Domenico should relinquish the crucifix he held in his hand, and he immediately let it go, saying that he would enter the fire bearing the Host instead. But this led to fresh and fiercer dispute, the Minorites declaring that he wished to destroy the consecrated wafer. But now Frà Domenico began to lose patience, and refused to give way, maintaining with Savonarola, that, in any case, only the accidental husk would be consumed, the substance

[1] Burlamacchi and Frà Benedetto.

[2] The following words of Frà Benedetto, in his often quoted "Vulnera Diligentis," are specially worthy of note: "But let this grand secret be known to you, that only a few days after the attempted ordeal, many persons sought the spiritual superior of the city of Florence, for the purpose of asking and obtaining absolution, inasmuch as those persons had intended to kill the Prophet with their own hands (*manibus*) on the day of the ordeal. And, if thou wouldst be better assured of this, go and question M. Bartolommeo Redditi on the matter, for he is still living, and heard of the affair from the aforesaid superior's lips, and has borne, and continues to bear, truthful witness to this fact." *Vide* Appendix to the Italian edition, doc. xvii.

[3] Frà Benedetto.

of the sacrament remaining intact; and quoted the arguments of many theologians to this effect.[1] On meeting with some contradiction at last, his adversaries assailed Savonarola with still greater vehemence, in the hope of creating fresh delay. While they were disputing, the evening began to close in, and the puzzled Signory took advantage of this to proclaim that it was now impossible for the ordeal to take place.[2]

The indignation of the people then passed all bounds, and, as no one exactly knew whose was the blame, most of them accused Savonarola: even the Piagnoni declared that he ought to have entered the fire alone, if none would go with him, for the sake of giving a final and indisputable proof of his supernatural power. And then the Arrabbiati and the Signory caused it to be rumoured about that his fraud had been unmasked; that after provoking the trial, he had refused to pass through the flames, and similar falsehoods; while the Minorites impudently claimed the victory, although their champion had remained concealed in the palace, without so much as daring to glance at the pyre prepared for him.[3] Accordingly the whole city rang with menacing cries against Savonarola and St. Mark's.

[1] Burlamacchi, Viola, Frà Benedetto. Frà Domenico deposed at his trial that he refused to yield this point, because Frà Silvestro had beheld their angels in a vision, and been told by them that he (Frà Domenico) was to enter the fire with the Host.

[2] Nardi says that the rain prevented the ordeal, and many other writers subsequently repeated the statement; but Violi, Burlamacchi, and Frà Benedetto prove beyond doubt that it was forbidden by special order of the Signory. In the "Archivio Storico Italiano," series iii. vol. xiii. pp. 366–375, Prof. A. Conti has published a narrative of the controversy with the Minorite friars, and of the ordeal by fire, written by Padre Dionisio Pulinari, who had compiled it from the "Cronache" of Frà Mariano di Firenze, an eye-witness of the event.

[3] "They put on the face of a harlot, for, without blushing in the least, they went about saying that the victory was theirs, and wrote letters to all to the like effect" (Frà Benedetto, Appendix to the Italian edition, doc. xvii.) *Vide* also Violi (Appendix to the Italian edition), the "Vita Latina," and Burlamacchi.

The Dominicans had a hard struggle to regain the Convent in safety, although escorted by the soldiers of Marcuccio Salviati, who, surrounding Savonarola and Frà Domenico with a band of his bravest men, courageously protected them, sword in hand, from the insults of an infuriated mob, egged on by the Compagnacci.[1]

On finally reaching the church, where the female congregation still knelt in prayer, Savonarola mounted the pulpit, and gave a brief summary of all that had occurred, while the Piazza outside was still echoing with the mad yells of his foes.[2] Then, having dismissed his hearers, he withdrew to his cell, overcome with a grief too deep for words.

The Minorites, on the contrary, were exultant; and afterwards the Signory assigned them, for twenty years, a pension of sixty lire, payable every 7th of April, *in reward for their services on that day.* Nevertheless, the first time they sent to demand the sum, the Camarlingo of the Bank was so enraged by their baseness, that in paying out the money, he exclaimed: "Here, take the price of the blood ye betrayed!"[3]

The Signory must have incurred considerable expense in preparations for this strange and fatal ordeal. There is a memorandum to the effect that 662 *lire*, 15*s.*, 8*d.* were paid for combustibles and in wages to men who worked by torchlight as well as all day. An additional sum of 111 *lire* was spent on food and drink for the numerous guards and citizens employed in various ways on that day. There were also other incidental expenses.[4]

[1] Frà Benedetto, Burlamacchi, and the "Vita Latina."

[2] Ibid.

[3] This anecdote is given in Burlamacchi, and in a great number of manuscripts also containing a report of the decree ordaining the pension, which has been published by Perrens, vol. ii. p. 513, doc. xx.

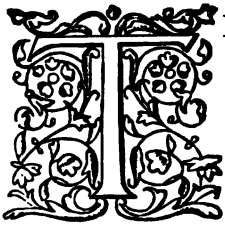
[4] *Vide* Gherardi, "Nuovi Documenti," 2nd ed. pp. 221 and 271.

As we shall presently see, Briefs soon poured in from Rome filled with praises and promises of reward for the attempt that the Pope had not only feigned to disapprove, but even to censure.

# CHAPTER VIII.

*THE ATTACK AND DEFENCE OF THE CONVENT; SAVONAROLA AND HIS TWO COMPANIONS ARE LED TO PRISON.*

(APRIL 8, 9, 1498.)



THE ordeal by fire, or rather the plot contrived on that day by the Arrabbiati, had produced the desired effect. The whole city was now turned against Frà Girolamo and his monks. It was an unpardonable offence in the eyes of the populace that neither he nor his disciple should have entered the fire, even without the Franciscan, in order to silence his enemies by a miracle. The Piagnoni could not follow all the subtle distinctions drawn by their chief, as to the time not being ripe, on not tempting the Lord, and on the question of the good or bad faith of his adversaries; they therefore began for the first time to doubt his supernatural power, and to be disposed to give ear to the reports and calumnies of the Arrabbiati. The latter displayed incredible activity in these days, held continual interviews with the Signory and the Canons of the Duomo, and were clearly seen to be on the point of dealing some new and decisive blow. At the same time, the more sagacious of the Friar's adherents, who might have foreseen and frustrated the enemies' designs, were too weak

in numbers and influence to oppose any effectual resistance. Hence they were insulted on all sides as hypocrites and ranting impostors, and could not show themselves without danger in the streets.[1]

In this state of things some of the popular party, recognizing the premonitory signs of a terrible storm, took counsel among themselves, and proposed to fly to arms so as to have the advantage of dealing the first blow. But all Savonarola's staunchest disciples, and Francesco Valori in particular, energetically opposed the plan, saying that they must not be the first to shed their fellow-citizens' blood, nor the first to dye their hands in it. The majority were won over to this view, but many of the others were greatly enraged, and indeed Luca degli Albizzi, one of the most eager to resort to arms, hastened to leave Florence, saying: "If we are not to come to blows, every one is justified in providing for his own safety."

The morning of the 8th of April, Palm Sunday, passed quietly; but it was easy for an observant eye to discern that this tranquillity was only the sullen calm that precedes a storm, and that it was a marvel no startling event had yet occurred. Savonarola preached in St. Mark's, but his sermon was very short and sad; he offered his body as a sacrifice to God, and declared his readiness to face death for the good of his flock. Mournfully, but with much composure, he took leave of his people, and in giving them his benediction seemed to feel that he was addressing them for the last time.[2]

[1] Nardi, i. p. 149; "Vita Latina;" Burlamacchi, p. 136; Frà Benedetto, "Cedrus Libani."

[2] Nardi, i. p. 150. On this subject the same writer remarks: "This man was always so true to himself that he never showed signs of dismay in any of his tribulations or dangers." And he pronounced this judgment even at the time of Savonarola's trial, regarding which we shall presently see what he has to say.

Later in the day the Piagnoni went to St. Mark's while vespers were going on, and then set out towards the Duomo, where a sermon was about to be delivered by Frà Mariano degli Ughi, the friar who had offered to brave the ordeal together with Frà Malatesta and Frà Domenico. But they were repeatedly pelted with stones by the way, and encountered groups of Arrabbiati, whose exultant demeanour seemed to say: "Our turn has come at last!" They saw others hurling stones at the windows of Andrea Cambini, one of Savonarola's adherents. On reaching the Duomo, they found many of the benches already crowded with people; but the Compagnacci had gathered round the door, addressing insults to all who entered the church, and telling them there would be no sermon. The Piagnoni hotly rejoined, that it would certainly be given; one word led to another, and the Compagnacci instantly unsheathed their swords and began to lay about them; made a rush upon a certain Lando Sassolini, and although they inflicted no wound upon him, their violence sufficed to raise a disturbance throughout the city.[1] The Friar's adherents then hurried to their homes to procure arms, while a portion of their adversaries held the corners of the streets, and all the rest marched through the city, crying: "*To St. Mark's, to St. Mark's, fire in hand!*" They assembled on the Piazza of the Signory, and when their numbers had sufficiently increased, moved in the direction of the convent, brandishing their weapons and uttering fierce cries. On the way they caught sight of a certain man, named Pecori, who was quietly walking to the Church of the Santissima Annunziata, singing psalms as he went; and immediately some of them rushed after him, crying: "Does the hypocrite still dare

[1] Burlamacchi, p. 135 and fol.; Giovanni Cambi, "Storie," in the "Delizie degli Eruditi Toscani," vol. xxi. p. 119. *Vide* also the depositions of the accused in the Appendix to the Italian edition.

to mumble!" And overtaking him on the steps of the Innocenti,[1] they slew him on the spot. A poor spectacle maker, hearing the great noise in the street, came out with his slippers in his hand, and while trying to persuade the people to be quiet, was killed by a sword thrust in his head.[2] Others shared the same fate; and in this way, infuriated by the taste of blood, the mob poured into the Square of St. Mark. Finding the church thronged with the people who had attended vespers, and were still engaged in prayer, they hurled a dense shower of stones through the door; whereat a general panic ensued, the women shrieked loudly, and all took to flight. In a moment the church was emptied, its doors, as well as those of the convent, were locked and barred; and no one remained within save the few citizens who were bent on defending St. Mark's.[3]

Although barely thirty in number,[4] these comprised some of the most devoted of Savonarola's adherents; the men who had escorted him to the pulpit, and were ever prepared to risk their life in his service. For some days past they had known that the convent was in danger; and accordingly eight or ten of them had always come to guard it by night. Without the knowledge of Savonarola or Frà Domenico, whom they knew to be averse to all deeds of violence, they had, by the suggestion of Frà Silvestro and Frà Francesco de' Medici, secretly deposited

[1] The Foundling Hospital, near the Church of the Annunziata.

[2] Burlamacchi, p. 136.

[3] "Vita Latina;" Burlamacchi; Frà Benedetto, "Cedrus Libani." The attack on the church and convent of St. Mark is minutely described in this poem. An account of the facts is also to be gleaned from the depositions of the accused.

[4] All this is related in great detail by Burlamacchi and Frà Benedetto, but they considerably exaggerate the numbers of those concerned in the fray. The exact figures are to be ascertained from the depositions of the accused prisoners, and the documents of Frà Domenico's trial.

a store of arms in a cell beneath the cloister.[1] Here were some twelve breastplates, and as many helmets; eighteen halberts, five or six crossbows, shields of different kinds, four or five harquebusses, a barrel of powder, and leaden bullets,[2] and even, as it would seem, two small mortars.[3] Francesco Davanzati, who had furnished almost all these weapons, and was then in the convent, brought out and distributed them to those best able to use them. Assisted by Baldo Inghirlami, he directed the defence for some time, placing guards at the weakest points, and giving the necessary orders.[4] About sixteen of the friars took arms,[5] and foremost among them were Frà Luca, son of Andrea della Robbia, and our Frà Benedetto.[6] It was a strange sight to see some of these men,[7] with

[1] *Vide* in Appendix to the Italian edition the examination of Francesco Davanzati, of Luca della Robbia, Bartolommeo Mei, and Francesco dei Medici. *Vide* also the trial of the three Friars.

[2] Frà Domenico, who confessed nothing that was not strictly true, says that he had neither known nor suspected the existence of any arms in the convent, save of the few weapons employed for Savonarola's protection when he walked abroad. "Most assuredly," he said, "these arms were never brought in by the order, or even with the knowledge of Padre Frà Hieronymo, neither were they introduced by my will, since I always laughed at the idea of such a thing" (*i.e.*, the idea of offering armed resistance). And this statement was confirmed by the depositions of the other prisoners.

[3] Some allusion was made to these two small mortars in the examination of Lionello Boni and Bartolommeo Mei: the former replied that he had heard something said about them, and the other thought he had had a sight of them. Certain modern writers, finding the word *artillery* used by some old writers in accounts of these events, believed that they were cannon at St. Mark's. This, as we shall see, was merely one of the exaggerations diffused at the time. In those days all firearms were designated as artillery, and all the artillery used in the convent consisted of four or five muskets, since the mortars, if there were any, were never employed.

[4] *Vide* the examination of Niccolò Calzaiuolo in Appendix to the Italian edition.

[5] This was not ascertained clearly from the friar's own depositions, but from those of the other prisoners.

[6] *Vide* his examination in Appendix to the Italian edition.

[7] Frà Benedetto, "Cedrus Libani."

breastplates over their Dominican robes and helmets on their heads, brandishing enormous halberts and speeding through the cloister, with shouts of *Viva Cristo*, to call their companions to arms.

Savonarola was deeply grieved by this, and Frà Domenico went about imploring all to cast aside their weapons. "They must not stain their hands in blood; they must not disobey the precepts of the gospel, nor their superior's commands."[1] So he cried, but all was in vain, for at that moment the furious yells outside rose to a deafening pitch, and more determined attacks were made on the gates. It was then that Savonarola resolved to end the fruitless and painful struggle by the sacrifice of his own safety; so, assuming his priest's vestments, and taking a cross in his hand, he said to his companions: "Suffer me to go forth, since through me *orta est haec tempestas*;" and wished to surrender himself to his enemies at once.[2] But he was met by universal cries of despair; friars and laymen pressed round him with tears and supplications. "No! do not leave us! you will be torn to pieces; and what would become of us without you?"[3] When he saw his most trusted friends barring the way before him, he turned about and bade all follow him to the church. First of all he carried the Host in procession through the cloisters; then led the way to the choir, and reminded them that prayer was the only weapon to be employed by ministers of religion, whereupon all fell on their knees before the consecrated wafer, and intoned the chant: *Salvum fac populum tuum, Domine.* Some had rested their weapons

[1] *Vide* Frà Domenico's trial in Appendix to the Italian edition.

[2] Burlamacchi, p. 136. *Vide* also, in Appendix to the Italian edition, the examination of Alessandro Pucci, and the trial of Frà Silvestro: all the latter's depositions in Savonarola's favour are thoroughly to be credited, since, in order to save himself, he generally sought to blacken his superior.

[3] Burlamacchi, and the trial of Frà Silvestro.

against the wall, others still grasped them, and only a few remained on guard at the main entrances.[1]

It was now about the twenty-second hour (*i.e.*, two hours before sundown), the throng on the Piazza had increased, the assailants were encouraged by meeting with no resistance, and the Signory's guards were coming to their aid. At this moment the macebearers appeared to proclaim the Signory's decree that all in the convent were to lay down their arms, and that Savonarola was sentenced to exile, and ordered to quit the Florentine territory within twelve hours' time.[2] Most of those who heard this announcement regarded it as a device of the enemy.[3] It was difficult to credit that the Signory could order the attacked, who were making scarcely any defence, to lay down their arms while the assailants, who were the sole authors of the disturbance, and in far greater numbers, were not only left unmolested, but supplied with reinforcements! Nevertheless, the proclamation decided several to obtain safe conducts and hurry away.

Francesco Valori was one of those who left the convent at this juncture. Although warned by Francesco Davanzati and others that he was exposing himself to serious risk, he insisted on being let down over the wall at the back. Seeing the feeble resistance offered by the inmates of the convent, while the enemies' forces were continually on the increase, he wished to repair to his own house, collect his adherents, and make a better fight in the streets. But his premises were quickly surrounded by the mob, who threatened to set them on fire; and a macebearer brought him a summons to appear before the

[1] Examinations of the accused; the trials of the three Friars; Frà Benedetto, "Cedrus Libani"; Burlamacchi.

[2] This proclamation is given in the Appendix to the Italian edition, doc. xix.

[3] Frà Domenico declared at his trial, that, to the very last, he refused to believe that the Signory positively supported the foes of St. Mark's.

Signory without delay. Being unprepared for resistance at the moment, he promptly obeyed, in the belief that his personal influence and authority would prevail with the magistrates, and make them ashamed of what they had done. Turning at once towards the Palace, with the macebearer at his side, he pushed through the crowd with the assured bearing and composed air of a man convinced of his own innocence, and unaccustomed to shrink from danger. But he had hardly passed the corner of San Procolo, when a group of Ridolfi and Tornabuoni, kinsmen of those he had caused to be condemned to death the previous year, fell upon him sword in hand, and killed him on the spot. Thus a public hurt was avenged by a private hate, and this was the miserable end of the valiant and honest citizen who had ever been Savonarola's most powerful ally. Meanwhile, startled by the noise, his wife had flown to the window in great alarm, and while listening, bewildered, to the cries of Valori and his assassins, a bolt, from a crossbow in the crowd below, reunited her to her slaughtered husband. In another instant the maddened populace had stormed the house, pillaged it and set it on fire. As a piteous sequel to this tragedy, a sleeping babe, one of Valori's grandchildren, was accidentally smothered under a mattress while the rabble were pillaging the beds. Yet the Signory allowed these outrages to pass with impunity, and never took the least notice of them.[1] On the same day the houses of Andrea Cambini were sacked and burnt, and those of Paolo Antonio Soderini and Giov. Battista Ridolfi were only saved from the popular fury by the presence of their friends and of some of the Signory's macebearers.[2]

[1] *Vide* the "Vita Latina," Burlamacchi, p. 187; Nardi, i. p. 151; Luca Landucci, "Diario," p. 171, and the other chroniclers of the period. *Vide* also the "Nuovi Documenti su G. Savonarola," published by Signor A. Portioli in the "Archivio Storico Lombardo," year i., No. iii.

[2] *Vide* the authors quoted in the preceding note, and the letters to the Duke of Milan, in the Appendix to the Italian edition, doc. xx.

Meanwhile night was falling, and the siege of the convent being carried on with desperate ferocity. Some fired the gates, while others had successfully scaled the walls on the Sapienza side,[1] and made their way into the cloisters. After sacking the infirmary and the cells, they all penetrated to the sacristy sword in hand, and broke open the door leading to the choir. When the friars, who were kneeling there in prayer, found themselves thus suddenly attacked, they were naturally stirred to self-defence. Seizing the burning torches, and crucifixes of metal and wood, they belaboured their assailants with so much energy that the latter fled in dismay, believing for a moment that a band of angels had come to the defence of the convent.[2]

Then the other monks, who had laid down their arms at Savonarola's behest, again resumed the defence, and there was more skirmishing in the cloisters and corridors. At the same time the great bell of the convent, called the Piagnona, tolled forth the alarm; both besiegers and besieged fought with greater fury; all was clamour and

[1] That is, from the street afterwards called Via del Maglio, and now Via La Marmora.

[2] This incident is given by Burlamacchi and the other biographers, and also in almost all the depositions of the accused. Frà Benedetto describes the scene as follows in chap. viii. of his "Cedrus Libani":

E figli del Profeta eran, cantando
Le litanie, avanti al Sacramento,
Di punto in punto il martirio espettando.
Et io, che fui presente a tal spavento,
Per voler che 'l Profeta non perissi
Più presto d'esser morto ero contento.
Forza fu li inimici s'assalissi,
Da venti el più, e con doppieri accesi,
A ciò foco per foco si sentissi.
E' volti degli avversi furno incesi,
E le lor teste percosse a tal forma,
Che furno espulsi, et alcun morti e presi.
E discacciâr si pochi si gran torma,
Cosa divina fu e non umana. . . .

confusion, cries of despair, and clashing of steel. This was the moment when Baldo Inghirlami and Francesco Davanzati dealt such vigorous blows, and that Frà Luca d'Andrea della Robbia chased the foes through the cloisters, sword in hand. Frà Benedetto and a few others mounted on the roof, and repeatedly drove back the enemy with a furious hail of stones and tiles. Several of the monks fired their muskets with good effect inside the church, and a certain Frà Enrico, a young, fair-haired, handsome German, particularly distinguished himself by his prowess. At the first beginning of the struggle he had courageously sallied out into the midst of the mob, and possessed himself of the weapon he wielded so valiantly, accompanying each stroke with the cry: "*Salvum fac populum tuum, Domine.*" [1]

At this juncture the victory was decidedly with St. Mark's, and its defenders were exulting in their success, when a fresh edict of the Signory was proclaimed, declaring all rebels who did not forsake the convent within an hour.[2] Thereupon several more demanded safe conducts and departed, thus further diminishing the too scanty garrison.[3] And there being no longer any doubt as to the Signory's intention of crushing St. Mark's, even the remnant of the defenders lost hope and courage, and were

[1] Frà Benedetto, "Cedrus Libani," loc. cit.:

Et io con alcun altri, l'alta scorza
Del tetto della chiesa gittavamo,
Che dell' uscirne a' nemici fu forza.
Lor arme e scuti a furia rompavamo,
Che lapide paria dal ciel piovessi:
Così lor forze indrieto tenavamo.

These incidents are mentioned by Burlamacchi, and in the examinations of several of the prisoners.

[2] *Vide* the edict in Appendix to the Italian edition, doc. xix.

[3] Shortly after, another edict (Appendix, doc. xix.) declared to be rebels all who went to St. Mark's, but this did not prevent the guards of the Signory from continuing to help the assailants.

already beginning to give way. Savonarola and many of his brethren still remained in the choir, offering up prayers, which were interrupted from time to time by the cries of the injured or the piteous wail of the dying. Among the latter was a youth of the Panciatichi House, who was borne, fatally wounded, to the steps of the high altar, and there, amid volleys of harquebuse shots, received the communion from Frà Domenico, and joyfully drew his last breath in the friar's arms, after kissing the crucifix, and exclaiming: *Ecce quam bonum et quam iucundum habitare fratres in unum!* [1]

Night had now come, and the monks, exhausted with hunger and agitation, devoured some dry figs one of their companions had brought. Suddenly the defence was resumed; louder cries were heard and fresh volleys of shot. In the pulpit from which Savonarola had so frequently inculcated the doctrine of peace, Frà Enrico, the German, had now taken his stand and was firing his harquebuse with fatal effect. The smoke became so dense that it was necessary to break the windows in order to escape suffocation; and thereupon long tongues of flame poured into the church from the burning doors. The German and another defender retreated into the choir, and, clambering upon the high altar, planted their harquebusses beside the great crucifix, and continued their fire.[2]

Savonarola was overwhelmed with grief by this waste of life in his cause, but was powerless to prevent it. No attention being paid to his protests, he again raised the Host, and commanded his friars to follow him. Traversing the dormitory, he had conducted nearly all to the Greek library, when he caught sight of Frà Benedetto rushing downstairs, maddened with fury and fully armed to con-

[1] "Vita Latina," Burlamacchi, p. 139. Also in the depositions of the accused.

[2] Burlamacchi. The depositions of Frà Luca della Robbia, of Girolamo Gini and others, in Appendix to the Italian edition.

front the assailants at close quarters. Laying his hand on his disciple's shoulder, he gave him a severe glance, and said, in a tone of earnest reproof: "Frà Benedetto, throw down those weapons and take up the cross; I never intended my brethren to shed blood."[1] And the monk humbled himself at his master's feet, laid aside his arms, and followed him to the library with the rest.

MICHELOZZO MICHELOZZI.

A final and still more threatening decree was now issued by the Signory against all who continued to resist, commanding Savonarola, Frà Domenico, and Frà Silvestro to present themselves at the palace without delay, and giving their word that no harm should be offered them. Frà Domenico insisted on seeing the order in writing, and the heralds,

[1] Frà Benedetto ("Cedrus Libani," chap. viii.) concludes his account of the incident thus:

> Allor cessò ciascun di far ripari,
> Ogn' uom di far difesu allora restò,
> Per non voler al Santo esser discari.

not having it with them, went back to fetch it. Meanwhile Savonarola had deposited the sacrament in the hall of the library beneath the noble arches of Michelozzi's vault, and, collecting the friars around him, addressed them for the last time in these memorable words: "My beloved children, in the presence of God, in the presence of the consecrated wafer, with our enemies already in the convent, I confirm the truth of my doctrines. All that I have said hath come to me from God, and He is my witness in heaven that I speak no lie. I had not foreseen that all the city would so quickly turn against me; nevertheless, may the Lord's will be done. My last exhortation to ye is this: let faith, prayer, and patience be your weapons. I leave ye with anguish and grief, to give myself into my enemies' hands. I know not whether they will take my life, but certain am I that, once dead, I shall be able to succour ye in heaven, far better than it hath been granted me to help ye on earth. Take comfort, embrace the cross, and by it shall ye find the way of salvation." [1]

The invaders were now masters of almost the whole of the convent, and Gioacchino della Vecchia, captain of the palace guard, threatened to knock down the walls with his guns, unless the orders of the Signory were obeyed. Frà Malatesta Sacramoro, the very man who, a few days before, had offered to walk through the fire, now played the part of Judas. He treated with the Compagnacci and persuaded them to present a written order, for which they sent an urgent request to the Signory, while Savonarola again confessed to Frà Domenico and took the sacrament from his hands,[2] in preparation for their common surrender. As for their companion, Frà Silvestro, he had hidden

[1] Frà Benedetto, "Cedrus Libani," chap. ix.

[2] Burlamacchi; Frà Benedetto, "Cedrus Libani"; Violi, "Giornata," iv.; the depositions of the accused, and the letters to the Duke of Milan in Appendix to the Italian edition, doc. xx.

himself, and in the confusion was nowhere to be found.[1]

[1] Burlamacchi and other writers state that there was no doubt as to Frà Silvestro's concealment. But it has been impossible to find in any contemporary authority the confirmation of a similar fact first mentioned by Vasari and afterwards repeated by others : namely, that the celebrated painter, Baccia della Porta, later known as Frà Bartolommeo, was in the convent at the time and hid himself through cowardice. This would seem

FRÀ BARTOLOMMEO.

scarcely credible : the resistance offered was less than was generally said; the greater part of the monks and many of the laymen remained passive and unarmed in deference to Savonarola's commands. Baccio may have possibly done the same. Frà Silvestro concealed himself in order to avoid arrest, but no search was made for Baccio della Porta. Nevertheless, for the sake of impartiality, it should be added, that, according to the depositions of the accused, it would seem that one of the laymen really hid himself; consequently, the tale told of Baccio della Porta (who only became a novice in 1500, and took the vows in 1501) may possibly be true. But throughout the documents and depositions of the different trials there is no mention of his name. Vasari, who belonged to a later period, and had no friendly feeling for Savonarola or St. Mark's, cannot be considered a safe authority on the subject. Hence we are inclined to consider his assertion unfounded.

Just then a singular incident occurred. One of Savonarola's disciples, a certain Girolamo Gini, who had long yearned to assume the Dominican robe, had come to vespers that day, and from the beginning of the riot energetically helped in the defence of the convent. When Savonarola ordered all to lay down their arms, this worthy artisan instantly obeyed, but nevertheless could not refrain from rushing through the cloisters and showing himself to the assailants, in his desire, as he confessed at his examination, to face death for the love of Jesus Christ. Having been wounded, he now appeared in the Greek library, with blood streaming from his head, and, kneeling at his master's feet, humbly prayed to be invested with the habit. And his request was granted on the spot.[1]

Savonarola was urged by some of his friends to consent to be lowered from the walls and seek safety in flight, since, if he once set foot in the palace, there was little chance of his ever leaving it alive. He hesitated and seemed on the point of adopting this sole means of escape, when Frà Malatesta turned on him and said: "Should not the shepherd lay down his life for his lambs?" These words appeared to touch him deeply, and he accordingly made no reply; but after kissing his brethren and folding them to his heart—this very Malatesta first of all—he deliberately gave himself up, together with his trusty and inseparable Frà Domenico, into the hands of the macebearers, who had returned from the Signory at that instant.[2] They had already sur-

[1] *Vide* his examination in Appendix to the Italian edition. He then said that this was no sudden impulse, inasmuch as for some time past he had left all his business in order to study and qualify himself for becoming a monk.

[2] Burlamacchi; Violi, "Giornata," iv. In the "Cedrus Libani," chap. ix., Frà Benedetto says:

El sangue iusto, o crudel, non dovevi
Conceder alle gente scellerate,
Che d'esser morto quel quasi 'l vedevi,
Parte di Juda furno tua pedate. . . .

rounded him, when he turned once more to his friars and said: "My brethren, take heed not to doubt. The work of the Lord shall go forward without cease, and my death will but hasten it on."[1] No sooner were the two friars led down into the cloisters, than the mob pressed round them with ferocious yells of triumph. At this Frà Benedetto, who had hitherto followed them at a distance, could no longer restrain his anguish; and pushing forward with tears and sobs, declared that he must go to prison with his master. But no one listened to him, for all were intoxicated with rage. The surging crowd bore Savonarola and Frà Domenico out into the Piazza of St. Mark's, and Frà Benedetto was left to his despair in the cloister. He tells us that so terrible an uproar was then heard, that all thought Savonarola had been slain on the spot.[2]

The seventh hour of the night (one o'clock, ant.) had now struck. The macebearers had bound Savonarola, and the rabble pressed about him in a thick mass, like a stormy sea; helmets, breastplates, swords, and spears glittered here and there in the dim light of lanterns and torches. All gazed on him with threatening mien, they flashed lanterns in his eyes, crying out: "Behold the true light!" they singed him with torches, saying: "Now give a turn to the key;" they twisted his fingers, struck him, and tauntingly inquired: "Prophesy who it is that has buffeted thee." Their ferocity reached such a pitch, that his guards had great difficulty in protecting him with a fence of crossed spears and shields. The insults he endured by the way may be more easily imagined than described, and the mob continued to wreak their brutality on him until he had entered the palace. Even while in the act of passing through the postern door, one of the

[1] Burlamacchi, p. 143.
[2] Burlamacchi, p. 143; Frà Benedetto, "Cedrus Libani," chap. x.

SAVONAROLA'S EMPTY CELL AT ST. MARK'S.

populace kicked him in the back and exclaimed: "This is the seat of his prophecies!"[1]

When the two prisoners were finally brought before the Gonfalonier, he asked whether they persisted in declaring that their words were divinely inspired; and on their replying in the affirmative, ordered them to be thrust into separate cells. Savonarola was placed in the Alberghettino (little hostelry), a small chamber in the bell-tower, in which Cosimo de' Medici had once suffered imprisonment, and where for the first time he found a little rest after the terrible events of the day. The same night his brother Alberto, who chanced to be in Florence, was arrested, but was soon set at liberty. The following day Frà Silvestro came out from his hiding-place, and was immediately betrayed by Sacramoro to the enemies, who had feasted all night on luxurious viands at the friars' humble board.[2]

[1] Burlamacchi, p. 144, and the "Vita Latina." Frà Benedetto, loc. cit., after a minute description of these scenes, adds:

> Tre mila in circa fu la gran canaglia,
> Che menò, via il pastor com 'un 'agnello,
> Per forza no, con persa lor battaglia.

And further on he says:

> Non so se tante grida è nell' Inferno,
> Qual fu la notte quando quel menorno
> A' Signor di Firenze a' quali el dierno.

[2] Burlamacchi, p. 144. The account of this day's work has been compiled from the "Vita Latina," the works of Burlamacchi and Pico, but more especially from the "Cedrus Libani" of Frà Benedetto, the interrogatories of the accused, the trials of the three friars, the decrees of the Signory, and the documents edited by Padre Marchese and others. The abundance of materials has increased instead of diminishing the difficulty of the task. All authorities give the same details of the event, but each in a different way, according to what they had seen or remembered, or as it best suited them to represent the facts. For it was often convenient to the accused to give an altered or diminished account of the part they had played. Only a laborious and most minute examination of documents has enabled us to arrive at what we believe to be a truthful statement of the facts derived from careful consultation of the evidence

Meanwhile, the Signory hastened to make known to Rome, Milan, and the other Courts all that had occurred on the evening of the 8th of April, colouring the facts in their own way and to suit the temper of the government they addressed. To the Florentine orator in France they gave a very summary sketch of the matter, ordering him to communicate it to no one. This was because they were aware of the king's friendship for Savonarola.[1] But they sent the minutest details to Bonsi in Rome, and commissioned him to obtain from the Pope a general absolution from all the censures they might have incurred, not only for their prolonged toleration of Savonarola's sermons, but also for having laid violent hands on ecclesiastics. They also begged to be authorized to sit in judgment on the friars, and at the same time seized the opportunity of asking for a speedy settlement of the question of Church tithes. It may be conceived with what eagerness the Pope replied to the Signory of Florence. He hastened to designate them as true sons of the Holy Church; gave them his full absolution and blessing; granted them the required authorization to examine, try, and torture the prisoners; praised all they had done; promised and sent to the city a plenary indulgence for the Easter octave in Santa Reparata; but insisted very strongly that on the conclusion of the trial the friars should be given into his hands to suffer the punishment they deserved. Nevertheless, he was lavish only of promises as regarded the Church tithes and all the rest. The Duke of Milan also sent special messengers with

given by eye-witnesses. According to Somenzi, whose object it was to attenuate the importance of the riot, there were only twelve dead and twenty-five wounded. His letter was published in Professor Del Lungo's work, loc. cit., document xl. *Vide* also Appendix to the Italian edition, doc. xx.

[1] On the 9th of April they wrote to him thus: "You will communicate this letter to no one; it is solely for your private information" (Padre Marchese, loc. cit., doc. xxviii.).

letters of congratulation: expressed his desire to assist the Republic; urged the Signory to keep it united and quickly restore it to order; was ready to aid it in every emergency, and to surrender Pisa in a few days' time.[1]

But the best tidings for Savonarola's foes came from a most unexpected source. The latest letters from France brought the news that on the 7th of April, the day fixed for the ordeal by fire in Florence, Charles VIII. had died at Amboise. And his end had been wretched, even as Savonarola had so often predicted that it would be, in consequence of his abandonment of the Lord's work. Suddenly smitten by an apoplectic stroke, he had been carried into a most filthy hole;[2] and there, on a heap of straw, the King of France had drawn his last breath. But never was any prophecy more unfortunately fulfilled, nor with greater harm to the prophet. Savonarola lost in Charles his last and most powerful support, precisely when the only hope of safety lay in his help, and at the very moment when the monarch seemed again on the point of turning his thoughts to the affairs of Italy and the reform of the Church.[3] But, as we have already noted, all

[1] *Vide* the brief dated 12th of April, in Gherardi's "Nuovi Documenti," doc. vi., p. 145 and fol.; and also various letters from Bonsi in Rome, and Pepi in Milan in the same work. *Vide* also Nardi, i. 154; Burlamacchi, "Vita Latina;" Padre Marchese, docs. xxv. and xxx. From Pepi's letters it would seem that Ludovico was not altogether pleased by what had occurred, fearing, in fact, that the Florentines would now be too completely under the thumb of Alexander VI. Pepi himself was still more displeased, for as a follower of Savonarola, he no longer knew what attitude to assume. Pope Alexander, however, was overjoyed, and on the 11th of April sent two other complimentary briefs to Francesco di Puglia and the Franciscans, lauding all they had done against Savonarola. They are to be found in Quétif, "Additiones," pp. 462–463.

[2] *Vide* Commines, "Mémoires," lib. viii. chap. xxv.: "Estoit le plus deshonneste lieu de leans car tout le monde y pissoit, et estoit rompue à l'entrée."

[3] Commines, "Mémoires," lib. viii. chap. xxv. *Vide* the passage quoted elsewhere in this volume. Even Guasconi, who was much at-

things now combined against the poor Friar; and no hope remained to him on earth.

tached to Savonarola, said, in announcing the death of King Charles to Mazzinghi: "And just when he was feeling the need of doing something, life has failed him." *Vide* his letter given in the examination of Mazzinghi, in Appendix to the Italian edition, doc. xxix. No. 12.

# CHAPTER IX.

*SAVONAROLA IS EXAMINED AND PUT TO THE QUESTION. THE MAGISTRATES OF THE REPUBLIC CONCOCT TWO FALSIFIED REPORTS OF HIS AVOWALS, BUT STILL FAIL TO PROVE HIS GUILT.*

(APRIL 9–25, 1498.)

THE day following the tumult was Holy Monday: the beginning of the week consecrated to the memory of our Redeemer's sacrifice, during which the people were accustomed to crowd round Savonarola in the greatest numbers, and in which he had always delivered his most impressive and eloquent sermons. Now, on the contrary, he was hidden in a dungeon, in the hands of the enemies, who were masters of the town.[1] An unusual activity was to be noticed in the Palace, a perpetual running to and fro of heralds and macebearers, searching in the name of the magistrates for all who were best known as partisans of the Friar and the popular government. Some, in defiance of the express prohibition, succeeded in escaping; while others gave themselves up. In this manner, besides

[1] Landucci writes, at p. 171 of his "Diario": "And nothing more was done on the 9th day of April, 1498; weapons were at rest, but not tongues; hell seemed let loose; men were never weary of crying *traitor and thief*. As for saying a word in the Friar's favour, it was impossible; one would have been killed."

Savonarola and his two companions, Frà Domenico and Frà Silvestro, nineteen others, some monks and some laymen, were arrested, either for having taken part in the defence of the convent or as known and declared Piagnoni.[1] After the sack of St. Mark's the whole building was carefully searched from end to end, and Savonarola's cell in particular, in the hope of discovering papers that might be useful in concocting the evidence by which it was planned to destroy him. Meanwhile the brethren had withdrawn to the infirmary: where, after having tended the wounded and dying, not only of their own side but also of the attacking party, they erected an altar and engaged in prayer.[2] At the same time the Compagnacci collected all the weapons they found in the convent church, stacked them in a cart, carried them, still blood-stained, round the city and exhibited them to the people, crying: "Behold the miracles of St. Mark; behold the miracles of the Friar, and the tokens of his love for the people of Florence!"[3]

All this naturally had much effect on the multitude, who considered themselves defrauded and tricked, because no miracle had been wrought either on the day of the ordeal by fire, or at the storming of the convent. And the Signory, intent on striking the iron while it was hot, neglected no means of forwarding their purpose. A Pratica was assembled the same day to discuss the best mode of conducting the prisoners' examination. Their inquiries on this occasion plainly showed that they had not only resolved to break their sworn pledge of releasing Savonarola and his two companions, but were also determined to override the customs and even the laws of the Republic.

[1] *Vide* their interrogatories or examinations in Appendix to the Italian edition, doc. xxx.

[2] Burlamacchi, p. 144.

[3] Ibid. p. 145.

SAVONAROLA WRITING IN HIS CELL.

In fact, they first of all demanded "whether the three friars whom they had been obliged to seize, for the honour of the Republic, should be examined here in Florence, or sent to Rome in accordance with the Pontiff's request;"[1] and they next asked: "What should be decreed as to the functions of the actual Ten of Liberty and Eight of Guard?" Both these magistracies, and the first in particular, having always been favourable to Savonarola, this was a very important question; for, according to the law, it was the special function of the Eight to judge State offences. Hence the Signory wished both the Eight and the Ten to be changed before the expiration of their legal term of office, in order to ensure the election of men of their own party. This would be the only means of securing full liberty of action. We have no detailed report of the debate. Nothing but the briefest outline of the proceedings and the gist of the speeches made on the occasion have been preserved. Messer Guidantonio Vespucci, spokesman for the bench of the doctors of the law, who in the Pratica of the 14th of March had been the chief of Savonarola's opponents, was the first to rise to his feet. He instantly proposed: "That Frà Ieronimo should be privately examined by competent persons, so that when the trial was concluded, only such portions of it as their Excellencies thought fit need be made known to the public. That it would not be expedient to send the Friar to Rome, but merely to inform the Pope that he would be kept in safe custody. As to the magistrates of the Ten," he added, "some think that a new election should immediately be held; whereas others consider that the present men should continue in office until the expiration of their legal term. As to the Eight, it should be

[1] *Vide* the Pratica in the Register previously quoted, at sheet 189 and fol., and in doc. viii. of Professor Lupi's published collection.

noted that their term is almost at an end."[1] Almost all the other speakers shared these views, but some went farther. Giuliano Mazzinghi, in fact, suggested that both the Eight and the Ten should at once be changed, "considering the temper of the men actually in office." Giovan Paolo Lotti had even the audacity to add that if the new magistrates should not prove suitable, they should be compelled to resign, in order that others might be elected in their stead. The majority were also agreed that it would be by no means advisable to publish the trial in full, "remembering," as Paolo Rucellai said, "that Cæsar refused to look on the writings of Pompey."[2]

The gist of the matter was, that full powers were granted to the Government to make and unmake either of the two magistracies at will. The party of the Piagnoni was practically extinct, the Arrabbiati were supreme, and the Signory were now free to do as they chose. Accordingly they at once elected new councils of the Ten and the Eight, and made them take their places beside the men actually in office. Then, on the 11th of April, they appointed a special commission of seventeen examiners[3] to conduct the trial of the three friars, and with full power to use torture or any other means that might be found necessary to their purpose. The names of the commissioners chosen sufficed to prove with how little justice and impartiality the trial would be conducted. There was Giuliano Mazzinghi, who had suggested in the Pratica the immediate and unlawful dismissal from office of

[1] The Eight were to go out of office at the end of April; but the Ten were to be in power for two months longer.

[2] *Vide* the previously quoted report of the Pratica held on the 9th of April, 1498.

[3] *Vide* in Appendix, doc. xxiii., the decree of the 11th of April, 1498, in the above-quoted register, No. 100, in the Florence Archives, at sheet 35. Authorities vary as to the number of examiners appointed. Nardi states that there were twelve, Pico fifteen, Burlamacchi sixteen; we have adhered to the indisputable evidence of the official decree.

the Eight and the Ten; there was Piero degli Alberti, he that on the day of the ordeal had displayed such insolent and shameless animosity against Savonarola; there was Doffo Spini, the chief of the Compagnacci, principal author of all the machinations against him, and ringleader in the riot on Ascension Day, at the ordeal by fire and in the assault on the convent. Thus the very man who had so often employed assassins to attempt the Friar's life, and tried to kill him with his own hands in the streets of Florence, was now one of the new Council of Eight and member of the commission specially chosen to conduct the trial and pronounce the final sentence. His person was well known to Savonarola, who had frequently seen him with eyes blazing with ferocious vindictiveness, and with his dagger half drawn from its sheath, trying to force his way through the impenetrable barrier of friends whose lives were heroically devoted to their master's defence. And he now beheld this man draped in the official robe and playing the part of a judge, and immediately realized what humanity would be shown in the examination and what honesty in the verdict. The intention to violate all principles of law and justice was so plainly evident, even from the first, that one of the examiners indignantly threw up his appointment the moment after receiving it, declaring "that he would have no share in this homicide."[1]

From the outset innumerable illegalities were committed. The commission was appointed by a decree of the 11th of April to preside over a trial nominally begun on the 9th, with the assistance of two Florentine canons selected by

[1] In recounting this fact, Burlamacchi attributes the words to Francesco degli Albizzi, but this was a mistake, since Albizzi's name is on the list of examiners in the printed version of the trial. Bartolo Zati is the man whose name is included in the list formed on the 11th of April, but absent from that printed in the report of the trial. Thus the original number of seventeen examiners was reduced to sixteen.

order of the Pope, whose letter to that effect, as Violi observes, and likewise by the evidence of the official correspondence, could not possibly have arrived before the 14th. What is certain is that, after being interrogated on the night of his arrest—that is, between midnight on Palm Sunday, the 8th of April, and the morning of the 9th, Savonarola was taken the following day to the upper hall of the Bargello,[1] and after being again interrogated, threatened, and insulted, was roped to a pulley, and put to the question. He was hoisted some distance from the floor, then allowed to fall rapidly, and the rope being suddenly checked with a jerk, his arms were forced back until they described a half-circle, his muscles lacerated, and all his limbs quivering with pain. The torture of the rope and pulley, when slightly applied, was by no means one of the most cruel, but could sometimes be used in a way to overcome the strongest frame and the firmest endurance. When continued for any length of time it invariably produced delirium, sometimes ending in death; consequently the sufferer could be made to confess anything. It was only a question of time.

Even in early youth Savonarola had been of delicate and sensitive fibre, and owing to continued austerities, prolonged vigils, and eight years of uninterrupted ministrations in the pulpit, he had become singularly ailing and nervous. Indeed for some time past he had been in a state of almost incessant suffering, and only seemed to live by the force of his will. All that he had undergone during these last days—peril, insult, and the pain of finding himself forsaken by all—had greatly increased his already morbid sensibility. In this state he was subjected to cruel and and unbearable torture! As was only to be expected, he

[1] The palace of the Bargello was then next to the Custom House, and joined by it to that of the Signoria.

soon began to rave; his replies lost all coherence,[1] and at last, as if despairing of himself, he cried in a voice that might have softened a stone, though with no effect upon his judges: *Tolle, tolle, Domine, animam meam.*[2] Well indeed for him had he died at that moment! His memory would have been spared many new calumnies, and his heart an endless series of novel pangs.

So far his enemies had extorted no avowals from him. On being taken down and again interrogated he reasserted the truth of his doctrines, and when requested to answer differently, exclaimed, "Ye tempt the Lord."[3] He was then supplied with writing materials, but the nature of his declarations caused the examiners first to conceal and then destroy the sheets, and to discard the idea of basing the trial on the prisoner's autograph confessions, as was required by the law. These few papers, of which no trace was preserved, may be considered as Savonarola's only authentic confession,[4] since, as we shall presently see, he was allowed to write nothing more with his own hand throughout the rest of his examination. On perceiving that nothing suited to their purpose could be extracted from his vague replies, they had him unbound and sent back to prison. Once in his cell, he knelt down and prayed for his executioners, crying: "O Lord, they know not what they do."[5]

The proceedings had now to be started afresh, new

[1] "Inventum est item in posterioribus confessionum libellis obtestatum se vi tormentorum multa dixisse, et abalienari animo cum torqueretur" (Pico, p. 83). Several proofs of this are even to be gleaned from the trial.

[2] Burlamacchi, pp. 145–46; Pico, p. 77.

[3] "Vita Latina," Burlamacchi and Pico. See, too, in Appendix, docs. xxi. and xxii., and the narratives of Violi and Frà Benedetto.

[4] Hence the existence of a genuine *procès-verbale* in the Friar's hand is altogether hypothetical. Much information will be found concerning the few papers he really wrote, and which were subsequently destroyed, in Violi's "Giornate" and the "Vulnera Diligentis" of Frà Benedetto.

[5] Burlamacchi and Pico.

measures adopted; and the Signory lost no time in delay. They not only asked and obtained absolution from Rome for the imprisonment, examination, and torture of ecclesiastics, but permission to continue the same so long as they thought fit.[1] And meanwhile they summoned another Pratica to consult what reply should be made to the Pope as to sending the three friars to Rome after the trial. Almost all voted against giving up the prisoners, but suggested that the Pope should be kept in good humour by fair words, so that he might be induced to grant them the tithe on Church property.[2] Finally a commission was appointed in due legal form to draw up the case against the prisoners. But how was it to be drawn up? It was so hard to decide this capital point, that all proceedings were suspended on the 10th of April.[3] The people murmured impatiently at the delay, the Signory knew not what to do, and openly groaned over the uncertainty with their intimates. Seeing that, apart from his written replies, nothing but vague and contradictory words were to be extorted, even by torture, from Savonarola, how could he be condemned with any show of legality? The fabrication of entirely fictitious avowals would never be sanctioned by all the commissioners, added to which, a fraud of this kind would be liable to discovery and might have very serious consequences. It was then that a Florentine notary, Ser Ceccone di Ser Barone, said to one of the examiners who was making these complaints: "Where no real case exists, it is necessary to invent one."

[1] *Vide* the brief of the 17th of April, 1498, and the letters of the Signory and their ambassador at pp. 154–55 of Gherardi's work. *Vide* also Padre Marchese, doc. xxx.

[2] Pratica of the 13th of April in the before-quoted Register, and in doc. ix. of Signor Lupi's published collection.

[3] So it would seem from the two editions of the trial published at the time, although we have the authority of several Codices to the effect that even on the 10th the examination of the accused was continued. The manuscript minutes of the trial underwent many arbitrary alterations.

And he added that he should not be afraid to find a way of doing it.[1]

This Ceccone had originally belonged to the Medicean party and been concerned in Piero's conspiracy, but on its discovery had sought refuge at St. Mark's, and found protection and safety with the monks. While there he feigned to be converted to religion, daily attended the sermon, and played the part of a Piagnone. But this did not prevent him from acting as a spy for Duke Ludovico, to whom he wrote letters in cypher, with full details of all that was going on in Florence.[2] He continued to pursue this career until Savonarola's incarceration, when, throwing off the mask, he not only showed himself a declared enemy of the Friar, but offered to draw up falsified depositions, altering the prisoner's replies, without too many verbal changes, in such a way as to facilitate his condemnation. He was known to be a sharp-witted man, quite capable of the work, and accordingly his offer was not only accepted, but he was promised the considerable reward of four hundred ducats in the event of his success. No attention was paid to the fact that as notary to the Signory he was legally unqualified to draw up the case.[3] But legality was now altogether discarded. Thus, on the 11th, a real beginning was made to the so-called trial, and the iniquitous mode in which the evidence was compiled proved the origin of many strange and contradictory opinions regarding Savonarola,

[1] Burlamacchi, p. 147. Detailed information concerning Ceccone may be found not only in all the biographers, both ancient and modern, but also in Violi's "Giornate" and the "Vulnera Diligentis" of Frà Benedetto, ii., chap. 20. There are documents in the Florence Archives proving that he had been employed in the Chancery of the Eight of Pratica until the expulsion of the Medici in 1494. After that his handwriting only reappears again in the minutes of the trials of April, 1498.

[2] *Vide* the authors previously quoted. It is possible that he was the *secret friend* frequently mentioned in Somenzi's letters to the Duke.

[3] Violi and Frà Benedetto speak with indignation of this illegal proceeding.

and made it extremely difficult to disentangle truth from falsehood. Both indeed were so dexterously jumbled that it is often almost impossible to know what to believe.

We have no means of ascertaining how many times Savonarola was put to the question, but more than a month was certainly employed in framing the various depositions, and throughout that period he was repeatedly subjected to prolonged and terrible torture. An eye-witness stated that in one day he beheld him suffer fourteen turns of the rack.[1] Pico and Burlamacchi add that when suspended from the rope, hot coals were applied to the soles of his feet; and that after interrogating him during this torment, his examiners wrote in their report that "he had confessed of his own accord, and under no physical restraint." So many writers are agreed that he sometimes gave way under torture, that we are compelled to believe it, although a great number of his followers make assertions to the contrary. But the very nature of the case affords a stronger argument for belief than any written testimony. How could a man of the Friar's delicate frame and sensitive nerves have the strength to withstand such fierce and prolonged agony, when at the first jerk of the cords he fell into delirium? The executioner himself declared that he had never seen any one so quickly and severely affected by torture. We may be certain, that even then, for all his racked limbs and harrowed soul, had he suddenly found himself in the pulpit, in presence of the assembled people, under the influence of a thousand kind and attentive eyes, he would have been his old self again, and energetically reasserted every article of his creed, even at the cost of uttering the last word with the last breath in his body. But, when forsaken by all, surrounded by the stony faces

[1] Lorenzo Violi, "Giornata," vi. *Vide* Appendix, docs. xxi. and xxii.

of his foes, who would not listen to him, could not understand, and only sought to expose him to fresh torture, how was he to find vigour to recapitulate, explain, and justify his visions and prophecies? His utterances at these times were mere ravings of delirium. And how could one, no longer conscious of what he said, be held responsible for his words? [1]

But the worst agony for Savonarola, and perhaps the most painful moment of his whole life, must have been when, after the first application of torture, he was left to silence and solitude in the tower cell. There, face to face with his own conscience, he must have been compelled to recognize that he was unable to withstand physical torment; that once bound to the rope, his mind would soon wander, and that he might be easily made to give any reply demanded of him. What was to be done? As soon as the torture became unbearable, he would have to yield upon some point or another. Which point should be the one chosen? The charges against him were to be classed under three heads: religion, politics, and prophecy. As to yielding on the first point, it was not to be thought of; death were a thousand times preferable. To abjure his politics would not only be vile, but might greatly endanger the cause of the nation and of freedom. Therefore, since he had to give way on some point, it must be regarding his prophecies and visions.

We have already had occasion to see how this question of his gift of prophecy had continually entangled Savonarola in a maze of sophistry through which it is extremely difficult to follow his steps. Now, therefore, in the loneliness of his cell, broken down by the first turns of the rack, and humiliated by his weakness of nerve, we may well believe that his imagination was more

[1] *Vide* Burlamacchi, p. 145 and fol.; Pico, 33–34; Violi and Frà Benedetto in many passages of their before-quoted works.

excited than before. Many of his reasonings at this time are recorded by Pico and Burlamacchi; but they are described in far greater detail by Violi and Frà Benedetto, who devoted half their lives to investigating and writing commentaries on the trial, and were so completely imbued with their master's sophisms, as well as with his ideas, that we frequently seem to hear his voice from their lips. All they tell us on this head, not only corresponds with all Savonarola's ideas and the whole course of his life, but even with words actually spoken and written by him during his imprisonment. Consequently their testimony commands our fullest belief.[1]

He seems to have begun by recalling certain passages of St. Thomas Aquinas, in which it is laid down that it is by no means imperative to reveal the entire truth to perverse judges. Then, looking through the Bible, he found that Amos, Micah, Zechariah, and St. John the Baptist had sometimes denied that they were prophets, and given dubious replies; and remembering that Jesus Christ Himself had adopted this course, was it not allowable, nay fitting, for him to do the same? Nor was this the first time he had propounded this theory. After uttering some prophecy from the pulpit, he had often been heard to declare: "I am neither a prophet, nor the son of a prophet; I have never claimed to be a prophet." And, on proceeding, in a subsequent sermon, to explain these contradictory utterances, he would plunge into such a flood of allegorical interpretations and sophisms, that it was impossible to arrive at his real meaning. Naturally, therefore, the same man and the same contradictions are brought before us in the

[1] Some of Savonarola's followers have written whole volumes on this theme. *Vide* Pico, chap. xvii.; Frà Benedetto, "Vulnera Diligentis," bk. ii. chap. xxi. and elsewhere, especially bk. iii., which is devoted solely to this subject, and the whole of the "Giornata" vi. of Lorenzo Violi. *Vide* Appendix to the Italian edition, docs. xxi. and xxii.

depositions made during the trial. Having always been allegorical and obscure concerning his gift of prophecy, we may imagine how much vaguer and more confused he became at this juncture, when purposely endeavouring to bewilder his judges.

It should also be remembered that the firmness and heroism of great men in asserting their special beliefs, are always the results of faith and truth; and we have seen that Savonarola's visions and prophecies were chiefly the outcome of what, despite its sincerity, must undoubtedly be considered a fanatic state of mind. Whence could he derive strength to maintain the truth of these things under physical torture that clouded his brain, when, in the depths of his spirit, the subject was always involved in a maze of superstition and sophistry? This was the weak point in Savonarola's life and character, the point on which his examiners harassed him with their fiercest torments, and forming, we must frankly allow, the least worthy part of his depositions. He says and unsays, affirms and denies; he could not speak clearly on a subject of which his own perception was so vague; he could not show strength where he was weakest, and was, in short, the miserable victim of his own hallucinations. On this question, therefore, what heroism could be expected or hoped from him?

The difficulty of forming an exact conception of Savonarola's mental attitude is enormously increased by our ignorance of his genuine replies. All that was extorted from him by torture, was transcribed more or less faithfully by Ser Ceccone, and then altered with diabolical cunning before being copied into the minutes. Sometimes a *yes* was turned into a *no*, or *vice versâ*; or again, whole paragraphs of considerable length were omitted. Certain phrases also were con-

tinually interpolated, as, for instance: *this was my hypocrisy; this was my pride; I did it for the sake of worldly glory*, and so forth.[1] The examiners themselves, their notary, and a considerable number of other citizens, all testified to this.[2] Lorenzo Violi, who was enabled to compare the original draft with the printed minutes of the trial, took note of several of these alterations.[3] In reading the Friar's depositions, one finds many perceptible gaps and many undoubted interpolations frequently clashing with the sense and even the grammar of the paragraph to which they have been added. It is plainly evident that when the examiners found that neither by threats, torture, nor

[1] Here is what Nardi says on this subject, in his "Storia di Firenze," i. p. 170: "And, in order that my own conscience may not charge me with the guilt of concealing the truth, I am constrained to say what was told me by a great and noble citizen, one of the examiners of the said Friars, who, as a determined enemy of theirs, was appointed to that office, and afterwards arrested with many other citizens on the return of the Medici to Florence. One day, being at his villa and questioning him, in reference to a certain subject, how things truly went at that trial, he candidly declared to me, in his wife's presence, that it was perfectly true that, *for a good purpose, somewhat had been omitted from and somewhat added to* the depositions of Frà Girolamo. These were the actual words of his reply; I know not if he spake truly, but I know that I report them truly, and therefore believe that I now note them down truly." *Vide* Burlamacchi, Violi, Pico, &c. Our narrative in general is based throughout on the authority of contemporary writers and original documents; but in this chapter we have been specially scrupulous, and the reader may be assured that almost every sentence of it is based on the evidence of some original document or author of the period.

[2] In 2nd ed. of the "Nuovi Documenti," Signor Gherardi publishes two letters from Pier Francesco de' Medici to the Rector of Caseina, who, like so many of Savonarola's former friends, had now turned against him. And, as Gherardi justly remarks, "even if there were no other proofs of how the depositions were falsified, these letters alone would suffice to show the impossibility of obtaining genuine reports from similar examiners."

The priest seems to have feared that he might be implicated on account of his former relations with Savonarola; and accordingly, in a letter dated the 25th of April, 1498, Pier Francesco writes to reassure him, bidding him fear nothing, inasmuch as, even if Savonarola should say anything to his hurt, it would not be inserted in the report. *Vide* Gherardi, "Nuovi Documenti," 2nd ed. pp. 259–60.

[3] *Vide* Appendix to the Italian edition, docs. xxi. and xxii.

forged reports would it be possible to establish Savonarola's guilt, they resolved to do their utmost to rob him of his followers' admiration and esteem.

We have already said that the charges against him turned chiefly upon three points: his prophecies and visions, his religion, his politics; and how the first of the three was the weak point, that Savonarola had not the strength to maintain under torture. In spite of his sincere belief that he was not merely endowed with insight into the future, but was a true prophet in direct communication with the Lord, this belief was very different from the inspired faith in truth, religion, and freedom which gave him strength to suffer martyrdom with heroic calm. The first was but a confused and superstitious dream that he was unable to shake off during flights of visionary meditation or oratorical excitement when the affectionate glances of his flock served to inflame his imagination; but the dream vanished amid the stern realities of his dying moments. He himself lamented it, crying: "O Lord, Lord, Thou hast taken from me the spirit of prophecy!" [1]

Nevertheless, when first interrogated before all the Commissioners, he had insisted on the truth of his visions, had referred to the Divine voice that had addressed him through the lips of an angel, and concluded by saying: "Leave this matter alone; for if it was of God, ye will receive manifest proofs of it; if of man, it will fall to the ground. Whether I be, or be not, a prophet is no concern of the State; and no man hath the right to condemn or judge the intentions of other men." [2] But when again put to torture, he first

[1] We shall see elsewhere under what circumstances he repeated these words.

[2] All this was omitted in the minutes of the trial, but included in the original draft examined by Violi. *Vide* "Giornata," vi., given in Appendix to the Italian edition, doc. xxi.

denied that he was a prophet and then reasserted his gift; and on the torture being resumed, began to make vague and allegorical replies, which, being continually altered by their reporter, became too confused to be often intelligible. But whenever the judges desisted from questioning him as to his visions, he ceased to reply in the character of a deluded prophet, and spoke as became an intrepid martyr in the cause of religion and freedom.

Accordingly, in the second stage of the trial, when Savonarola had to speak of *his mission*, he was worthy of himself, and unshaken by torture. He frankly reasserted his belief that the Church must first be scourged and then regenerated. "To forward this end," he said, "I preached things by which Christians might know the abominations committed in Rome, and might unite in forming a council, the which, if once assembled, would, as I hoped, lead to the degradation of many prelates and even of the Pope; and I should have sought to be present, and was determined, when there, to preach and do things of which I might be proud." And, proceeding in the same strain, he frequently repeated: "I purposed to achieve great deeds in Italy and beyond the borders." When asked if he had thought to become Pope, he replied: "No; for had I accomplished this work, I should have deemed myself higher than any Cardinal or Pope."[1] Now, if words such as these are to be found in Ser Ceccone's falsified reports, how can we doubt Savonarola's heroic courage in upholding his religious ideas?

He showed the same courage when interrogated on politics. In spite of additions and alterations, we see that his replies were very firm and explicit. He repeatedly and indignantly denied the charge of having extorted State secrets by means of the confessional. He often

[1] *Vide* Savonarola's first trial in Appendix to the Italian edition, doc. xxvi.

reiterated that he had never meddled with the government; had shown neither favour nor disfavour to any man; that he had spoken on the affairs of the State in general, but had left all details to the care of Valori, Soderini, and other experts. "My sole aim was to promote free government and all measures tending to its improvement." He also alluded to some of the principal laws he had proposed or intended to propose later, such as the election of a perpetual Gonfalonier; and there is a noteworthy passage in which he states that on finding reason to suspect that some of his trustiest friends were scheming to get the government entirely into their own hands, he had immediately begun to preach against tyranny and every limited form of government, "so that, willingly or unwillingly, those persons should be driven to favour the civil government." Therefore, whenever liberty was at stake, he had been restrained by no personal considerations, had not even yielded to beloved and faithful followers of his own, and now, under torture, remained still firmer than before. We have the clearest evidence of this, even in the falsified reports drawn up by Ceccone to compass the Friar's condemnation.

After subjecting him for eleven days to continual interrogatories and tortures, the Commissioners finally brought the examination to an end. But although it was conducted with so much illegality, and with so many ingenious falsehoods introduced into the depositions, the evidence proved insufficient for the end proposed; and the Signory were highly displeased with the mode in which the case had been managed. When writing to the Pope, who had complained of their slowness, they were obliged to explain that they had to do "with a man of most enduring body and sagacious wits, who, hardening himself against torture, had involved the truth

in a thousand obscurities, and appeared determined, by his feigned sanctity, either to win lasting fame in future ages, or to suffer incarceration and death. Even by long and assiduous examination, continued for many days and with the aid of torture, we could barely extort anything from him, and we preferred not to reveal what he said, hoping to succeed in discovering the innermost windings of his mind." [1]

Throughout the whole course of the trial, Savonarola was undoubtedly consistent with his real self. As we have seen, intellect and superstition, lofty reasoning and vulgar sophistry, sublime heroism and, sometimes, unexpected weakness, were all combined in him, with, at bottom, a most noble, strong, and magnanimous character. It is true that he now maintains, now denies his gift of prophecy; but when questioned on points into which both mind and heart had a clear insight, he showed an unconquerable force of resistance. Promises, threats, repeated tortures were alike unavailing; even in delirium

[1] "Nobis fuit res cum homine patientissimi corporis et sagacis animi, qui contra tormenta animum obdurasset, et veritatem multis tenebris continue involveret; quique videretur ad hoc eo consilio accessisse, ut aut simulata sanctitate æternum sibi nomen apud homines pareret, aut in carcerem et in mortem iret: multaque et assidua quæstione, multis diebus, per vim, vix pauca extorsimus; quæ nunc celare animus erat, donec omnia nobis paterent sui animi involucra" (Padre Marchese, doc. xxxiv., loc. cit., p. 185). It is true that the Signory spoke falsely in saying that Savonarola was *patientissimi corporis;* but it is strange that Padre Marchese should be enraged by the letter and call it injurious to Savonarola, when, on the contrary, it is a splendid monument to his honour and fame. And it may here be remarked that, either through negligence or excessive affection, some of Savonarola's adherents have done him worse harm than his enemies. Nardi, for instance, although confessing that he had little knowledge of the trial, and writing many years after the event, nevertheless believed himself authorized to assert that only slight torture was inflicted on Savonarola, and, relying on his authority, innumerable writers afterwards repeated his words, without noticing that all contemporary biographers, chroniclers, and authors affirm the contrary, or that the Signory themselves had recorded how cruel was the extent of the Friar's sufferings.

his will remained firm and unshaken. Therefore the Signory had good reason to be most dissatisfied with the trial, seeing, to their decided pain and mortification, that notwithstanding his prolonged tortures and the numerous changes introduced into his depositions, Savonarola's innocence became more and more apparent. The only advantage they had gained by their attempt was that of discrediting him in the eyes of his followers, and this at any rate was of no little importance. Once deprived of the popular favour, they might venture on condemning him, without any regard for law, justice, or for his own declarations of innocence.

But first of all it was necessary to obtain his signature to the falsified depositions, the more especially because they were not, as required by the law, in the handwriting of the accused. Savonarola must therefore be induced to affix his name to the documents. It is difficult to exactly ascertain how this was accomplished. The examiners tell us that two days were spent in persuading the accused, by *words and humane encouragements*;[1] and all may imagine in what this humanity must have consisted.[2] Burlamacchi declares that one copy of the depositions was read to him, another given him to sign; and this would seem to be confirmed by what was afterwards said by the notary and judges themselves. In all probability, therefore, the first rough draft was read to the

[1] *Vide* the beginning of the report of the trial.

[2] The printed reports of the trial gave the world to understand that Savonarola had read them all with his own eyes, but this is contradicted by his biographers and also by the testimony of the witnesses whose signatures are appended to the documents. The first witness, Canon Adimari, vicar of the Archbishop Orsini, says in his subscription: "Interfuimus confessioni suprascripti Fratris Hieronymi Savonarolæ, qui lectis (sic) sibi," &c. This clearly proves that the depositions were read to, but not by him, and confutes the written statement made in the heading, that Savonarola, "having again re-read (the document)," appended his name to it.

accused, and Ceccone's second compilation—the one afterwards printed—presented to him for signature. Nevertheless the divergences between one document and the other, though numerous and important, left essential points untouched, as may be seen from Violi's transcription of the greater part of them.[1] Hence we are able to affirm that on the 19th of April, in the presence of eight witnesses, six of whom were monks of his own convent, Savonarola affixed his name to a deposition that, although contradicting no essential point of his doctrines, he would have done better to tear into pieces, or at least refuse to sign. But confused by his own allegorical interpretations, he believed that he had thoroughly vindicated his conscience and dignity. We must again repeat that he held himself as one apart from the rest of mankind. Convinced of the possession of supernatural gifts, he neither felt bound to use ordinary terms of speech, nor to reveal his inmost thoughts, deeming that he could never be understood by the common herd, while for true believers allegorical language would always be enough. Having adhered to this system throughout his career, in his sermons, writings, and familiar discourses, he continued to adhere to it in his depositions. To gain any definite idea of the value of this mystical language, it is necessary to recur to the sermons in which Savonarola spoke of himself, to the writings of his disciples, and particularly to Frà Benedetto's commentary on his depositions, and it will then be seen that both the master and his followers frequently attribute to their words a contrary meaning to that which is apparently expressed.[2]

[1] *Vide* Appendix to the Italian edition, docs. xxi. and xxii., the narratives of Violi and Frà Benedetto.

[2] *Vide* "Vulnera Diligentis," bk. ii. chap. 16 and fol., and also the third part or book of the same work, which is almost exclusively devoted to the same theme.

It is related that the notary, having read the depositions to Savonarola, inquired: "Is all that *is* written here true?" Whereupon he made reply: "That which *I have* written is true," thus availing himself of a verbal quibble, that is held up to admiration by Frà Benedetto, Burlamacchi, and Pico, because they consider it to resemble the replies given by the Saviour to his judges. But subtle comments of this kind may be put aside, together with the numerous anecdotes invented by exaggerated and blind admirers, who regarded Savonarola not as a man, but as a saint; kept lights burning before his portrait as before a shrine, and offered up prayers to him. What we know for certain is, that after all the witnesses had added their signatures, he turned to them and pronounced the following words: "My doctrine is known to ye, and is known to all. In my present tribulation I ask of ye only two things: to have care of the novices and to preserve them in the Christian doctrine, to which we have hitherto kept them steadfast. Pray for me to the Lord, whose spirit of prophecy is removed from me at this moment."[1] Frà Malatesta Sacramoro, who was apparently determined to persevere in the part of Judas, then said to him: "But are the things which thou hast subscribed true or false?" Thereupon, Savonarola, giving him an indignant glance, turned away without making any reply, and was then led back to his prison.[2] Once alone he tried to deliberately review all that he had done; but his harassed and wearied mind immediately recurred to mystic contemplation, his cell became peopled with supernatural forms and invisible beings, and transported into an imaginary world, every other idea disappeared from his mind.[3]

[1] "Vita Latina," at sheet 58[t]; Burlamacchi, p. 150; Pico, p. 79.

[2] Burlamacchi and Pico.

[3] This we shall find to be proved by what he wrote during his imprisonment.

Meanwhile, after prolonged debate, the Signory decided to print the depositions, although their notary was strongly opposed to that measure. In fact, notwithstanding the new alterations woven into them for the third time, the published version of the trial excited so general a burst of indignation against the Signory, that stringent orders were issued to suppress every copy. The greater part of them were consequently withdrawn; but in a few days[1] a second edition appeared, and publicity could no longer be evaded.

[1] In fact, there were two fifteenth-century editions of this first trial, and, although rare, a few copies of them are to be found in the public libraries of Florence. One of these editions, probably, we think, the first so hastily produced by the Signory, and then suppressed by public proclamation, begins as follows: "This is the examination and trial of Frà Hieronymo da Ferrara Savonarola, made by respectable and prudent men, commissioners and examiners of the Florentine Signory, solemnly elected and deputed, by *commission from the Holy Apostolic See*, as is faithfully herein shown." The other edition, of which the National Library possesses two copies, is inscribed as follows: "By the respectable and prudent men, commissioners and examiners of the excellent Florentine Signory, solemnly elected and deputed by the said excellent Signory." It would seem that the Signory sought to get out of the difficulty by subterfuge, throwing on the Pope the whole charge and responsibility of the trial and condemnation. And, in fact, we find them expressly stating, by letter, to the King of France, that Romolino and Turriano, the envoys of the Pope, had given sentence by the latter's authority, and that consequently the Signory had no responsibility in the matter: "Quo fit, ut nec mortis eius nos auctores fuerimus;" &c. *Vide* Padre Marchese, doc. xli. p. 193. Even the sentence pronounced by the Eight refers to that given by the Papal Commissioners. This serves to explain why the phrase, *by commission of the Holy Apostolic See*, was inserted in the report of the trial published by the Signory. It is absent from the other edition. We believe that it must have been for the same reason that the Pope's letters to Francesco di Puglia and the Franciscans were printed at the end of the trial. It is difficult to ascertain by whom the second edition, which also includes the two letters of the Pope, could have been produced. We read in Burlamacchi, p. 148: "Nevertheless, this report of the trial was very slight, and contained nothing of any moment; accordingly they (the Signory) did not wish to make it public, but rather to concoct another of more seeming importance. With all this God allowed it to be divulged, inasmuch as Ser Ceccone, having sent a copy of it to a friend who had pledged himself to show it to no one, the said friend deceived him, by giving the said trial to be printed and published." These

Putting aside the desire many must have felt that Savonarola should have shown greater firmness, it was nevertheless sufficiently clear that even the replies extorted by torture, although altered in the rough draft, still more altered in the copy he had signed and farther tampered with in the printed version, only served to establish his complete innocence.[1]

The Signory, after assembling several *Pratiche*,[2] in order to obtain advice on the matter, finally adopted the desperate resource of holding a second trial. This was begun on the 21st of April; continued on the morning and evening of the 23rd, nearly all the depositions being radically changed by the notary; interrupted on the 24th, and on the 25th signed without any witnesses by Savonarola,

words explain why the Signory caused a fresh version of the proceedings to be prepared; but the indiscretion alluded to, or another of the same sort, must, I believe, refer to the printed, instead of the manuscript version, and probably led to the production of a second edition, when the Signory ordered the suppression of the first.

[1] For all the particulars given above, the reader may be referred to the "Sesta Giornata" of Violi, and to the "Vulnera Diligentis," bk. ii. chap. 17, given in the Appendix to the Italian edition, docs. xxi. and xxii., and also to chap. 18, bk. ii. of the latter work, under the heading: *Delle contradizioni et falsità che sono nel processo stato stampato.* From what is said by Frà Benedetto and Violi, it is clear that the first written draft falsifying Savonarola's replies was very different from the copy placarded in the palace. This second copy differed again from the printed version of the trial, and Frà Benedetto himself noted down a few of the divergences he had discovered, as the following passage, for instance, which is omitted altogether from the second manuscript copy: "My citizens, when ye find that these enemies who believe not the things I have said, shall have committed some error, chastise them severely as enemies of the faith of Christ." He also remarked that the signatures of Savonarola and the witnesses had been altered, but without specifying how and where. But he repeatedly says that everything really subscribed by Savonarola redounds to his honour. He forgets to tell us whether the signed declarations he had seen were really in the Friar's handwriting; and it is impossible to arrive at the truth on this point, since the manuscript report of the trial kept in the Palace was burnt during the siege of Florence, as being an insult to Savonarola's memory. *Vide* also Varchi, "Storia di Firenze," Arbib edition, vol. ii. p. 365.

[2] *Vide* the before-quoted volume of "Pratiche" in the Florence Archives, and the collection edited by Signor Lupi.

who added to his signature an explicit declaration, that the document contained interpolations from the hand of Ser Ceccone. But this second attempt was soon given up, for the Signory found that it would only cause more confusion, and load them with greater responsibility.[1] They decided, therefore, to adhere to the first trial. But according to the custom of the Republic, it was necessary to have a full report of the proceedings read aloud in the hall of the Greater Council, in presence of the accused and of the general public. The Signory, however, merely allowed certain portions of it to be read by one of the chancellors of the Eight, who explained to the assembled crowd that Savonarola had refused to be present for fear of being stoned.[2] Of course no one believed this, and it was only another proof of the bad faith and ineptitude of the Signory, who were in fact so strongly dissatisfied with the whole conduct of the trial, that they gave Ser Ceccone only thirty ducats instead of four hundred,[3] on the score of his having failed to fulfil his engagements.

[1] This second trial was first discovered by ourselves. It is included in Appendix to the Italian edition, doc. xxvi.

[2] Nardi, i pp. 158–59, tells us that the reports were read of all Savonarola's different trials, even including that of his subsequent trial by the Papal Commissioners, the which being based upon questions of religious doctrine or ecclesiastical discipline was not subject to the approval of the council. But, as we have already noted, Nardi wrote on these things from memory, long after the event, and was frequently inexact as to details. He seems to think that a single report was afterwards concocted from the three which had been drawn up, but this is incorrect. On the 19th of April Somenzi wrote to Duke Ludovico, that the Signory had that day caused a *part* of the trial to be read before the Greater Council, "namely those parts of it which are of little moment." And this was to silence the champions of Savonarola, who were declaring that even by means of torture the Signory would never succeed in proving him guilty. On the 25th of April he wrote that they caused *another part of the trial* to be read, containing "*sòlum* the machinations and malicious practices of his followers." *Vide* Somenzi's letters in Appendix to the Italian edition, doc. xx. It is clear from all this that the Signory felt that notwithstanding the arbitrary changes and falsifications made in the reports, they had failed to achieve their purpose.

[3] This is stated by Burlamacchi, and also in the "Diario" of Landucci. According to Frà Benedetto, Ceccone received thirty-three ducats.

# CHAPTER X.

*FRA DOMENICO, FRA SILVESTRO, AND MANY OTHER FRIARS, AND FRIENDS OF THE CONVENT ARE BROUGHT TO TRIAL. SAVONAROLA WRITES HIS LAST COMPOSITIONS WHILE IN SOLITARY CONFINEMENT.*

(APRIL 26—MAY 18, 1498.)

THE examinations of the two other prisoners must have resulted in equal discomfiture to the Signory. Domenico da Pescia surpassed himself under torture. His examiners tried to make him believe that Savonarola had retracted everything; they subjected him to the rack and the still more cruel torment of the boot;[1] but all was in vain, for he remained as calm and unshaken as one of the early martyrs of the Church. They next resolved to make a virtue of necessity, allowed him to write his own confession, and were even disposed to publish it without alterations, in order to establish a reputation for honesty, and thus induce the public to believe in the falsified report

[1] This is affirmed in Violi's "Giornate." "Il Sacro Arsenale ovvero Prattica dell' Offitio della Santa Inquisitione," by Dr. G. Pasqualoni (Rome and Bologna, 1716). In describing the torture of the boot, the author relates, at page 248, how a victim who, "dicto tormento suppositus, in terra prostratus, talo pedis dexteri denudato inter duos ferreos taxillos concavos posito, et Ministro eos *stanghetta* comprimente, clamare coepit."

of Savonarola's trial.[1] But they lacked the courage to do it. On reading Frà Domenico's confession, they felt obliged to interpolate certain alterations, enabling them, without making any radical changes, to discolour the whole and efface the stamp of heroism that was visible in every word. They added to it, by guesswork, the names of the supporters of the convent, whom Frà Domenico had refused to betray, and even then could not decide to publish the document, but only circulated it in manuscript.

On collating the two copies of these depositions, which were discovered by ourselves, we find that the one retouched by the Signory is better arranged, more grammatical, and more correct in style than the true and genuine confession. The latter is marked by an earnest, ingenuous eloquence that is no product of art, but the spontaneous expression of a magnanimous soul. It is impossible to read this examination without being deeply moved; we seem to be present in the torture-chamber; to witness the horrible wrenching of the sufferer's limbs; to hear the grating of his bones; to hearken to the faint, sublime utterances of this courageous Monk, who greets the approach of death with a martyr's angelic smile, and whose spirit is stirred by mortal pain to fresh praises of his Lord.[2]

His deposition began with these words: "Our Lord God Jesus Christ knows that I, Frà Domenico, bound

[1] Frà Benedetto, "Vulnera Diligentis."

[2] Every one who reads both versions of this confession will easily be able to distinguish the genuine from the falsified copy. And if it be necessary to cite a contemporary authority, we have the powerful testimony of Frà Benedetto, who, in bk. iii. of his "Vulnera Diligentis," continually refers to Frà Domenico's *true* confession; and, to distinguish it from every other version, not only quotes its first and concluding words, but also a lengthy passage that is almost entirely omitted in the falsified copy. *Vide* Frà Benedetto, "Vulnera Diligentis," bk. iii. chaps. 3 and 9 in Codex 2985 of the Riccardi Library. *Vide* also, in Appendix to the Italian edition, the two confessions in doc. xxvii.

here for His sake, speak no falseness on any of these matters." He declared that Savonarola and himself had always been averse to making any preparations for defence, or to opposing any armed resistance at St. Mark's. Touching the ordeal by fire, he said: "I came with the firm resolve to go through it, nor did I think that any objection would be made to my bearing the Host." "If, therefore, this gave rise to scandal, God, by whose will I accepted the ordeal, will grant me His reward, for verily I am deserving of it in this great infamy and persecution." And, on this first day, he concluded by saying to the Signory, "I pray ye not to interpret my words sophistically; but let them rather serve the purpose for which they are written." [1]

On the 16th of April, after the examiners had sought, by every kind of cruel and cunning device, to convince him that Savonarola had retracted,[2] they urged him to write his opinion of his master. And he hastened to write as follows: "From a certain impulse of my mind, I have ever believed, and, in the lack of better proof to the contrary, still firmly believe, in all the prophecies of Savonarola." And, after enumerating these prophecies he continued: "I am earnestly steadfast in this faith, nor should your Magnificencies be wrathful thereat, for this my belief can cause no hurt either to myself or the city, and in matters such as these every one is free to believe what he chooses." He also added that Savonarola had never suggested what he should preach, but had left him to be inspired by God. And he then said in conclusion: "I can remember nothing else; if ye desire to hear more from me, question me, according to the custom of good confessors, and I will endeavour to satisfy ye. And ye may truly believe all I say, inasmuch as having ever been

[1] *Vide* his confession, the first part of which is undated.
[2] We learn this from Frà Domenico's confession.

of a tender conscience, I know well that to speak lies before a tribunal, or to conceal that which should be made known, is a sin. I have endeavoured to be as precise as though at the point of death, and assuredly I might easily die if ye torture me again, for I am all shattered, and my arms are useless, especially the left, which by this [1] is now dislocated for the second time. Wherefore I beg ye to be merciful and believe in the truth of my plain declarations."

But the judges continuing to torture him with still greater cruelty, Frà Domenico then wrote: "I know no more, for my sole concern has been to live a virtuous life, with Jesus Christ as King of Florence." "Thus, if not believing me ye should even put me to torture anew, ye will discover no more, for there is nought else to be said; and ye will bring me nigh unto death." But his protestations were of no avail, for his judges were bent upon forcing him to deny his master. After putting him to renewed and more terrible anguish, they again bade him write, and thereupon the exhausted victim traced with trembling hand but undaunted courage the last and most remarkable words of his confession: "God's will be done. I have never perceived, nor had the least occasion to suspect that my Father, Frà Ieronimo, was a deceiver, or that he acted falsely in any wise; on the contrary, I have ever held him to be a thoroughly upright and most extraordinary man. And having a great reverence for him, I hoped, by his means, to receive grace from God and be enabled thereby to do some good to the souls of men; and holding him to be a man of God, I obeyed him as my superior, with all single-mindedness and zeal. . . . To my brethren and to a few laymen I have sometimes declared from the pulpit, that were I to detect the least error or deceit in Frà Ieronimo, I would openly reveal

[1] *I.e.*, this torture.

and proclaim it. And assuredly he himself has more than once testified that I was ready to do this; and I would do it now, if I knew of any duplicity in him. But none has ever come to my knowledge. *Finis. In simplicitate cordis mea lætus obtuli universa.*" [1]

Very different was the behaviour of Frà Silvestro. A sickly, nervous, visionary creature, subject to strange attacks of somnambulism, which he regarded as inspirations from God, he was of very weak character, and disposed to believe or disbelieve with equal facility. He had been much addicted to sauntering about the cloisters of St. Mark's, chattering with the townsfolk, and had been frequently reproved for this by Savonarola; but as many people sought his society, he always relapsed into the same error. Either from the difficulty of obtaining speech with Savonarola, and the knowledge of his entire confidence in Frà Silvestro, or from the widely spread fame of the latter's visions, and of the religious enthusiasm displayed in his conversation, it is certain that he was the chosen confessor of Francesco Valori, Piero Capponi, and other distinguished men, and in continual correspondence with them.[2]

But he cut a very poor figure in the hour of danger. We have seen how he disappeared during the attack on the convent, and remained in hiding until betrayed by Frà Malatesta to the guards. When subjected to examination on the 25th of April, his only thought was to save his own life, both at the sacrifice of his innocent master and his own dignity. His confession also underwent several changes at the hands of Ser Ceccone; [3] but its general

[1] *Vide* in Appendix to the Italian edition, doc. xxvii., the trial of Frà Domenico.

[2] The depositions of the three friars and of the rest of the accused; Burlamacchi, "Vita Latina." And Machiavelli alludes in his "Frammenti Storici" to Piero Capponi's relations with Frà Silvestro.

[3] Frà Benedetto says that *some* alteration was made in Frà Silvestro's confession. *Vide* "Vulnera Diligentis," bks. ii. and iii.

tendency and gist remained sufficiently clear, and were of a nature to disgust his warmest supporters. Yet, strangely enough, he unconsciously affords new and striking proofs of Savonarola's innocence. While giving long lists of the names of those who frequented the convent, while denying the doctrines, and doing his utmost to detract from the purity of his master's life, he was, nevertheless, obliged to confess that Savonarola had never allowed himself to be influenced by party intrigue, nor treated of State affairs at St. Mark's. He said in conclusion: "As regards my own opinion of Frà Girolamo's deeds, I may say that on twenty or twenty-five different occasions when he was about to preach, he would come, before the sermon, to my cell, and say to me: 'I know not what to preach; pray thou to God for me, since I fear that He may have forsaken me on account of my sins.' And he would say that he wished to unburden his soul, and accordingly make confession, and nevertheless would afterwards preach beautiful sermons. And the last time he did this, was on the Saturday before the last Sunday he preached in St. Mark's this Lent. Finally I declare that he deceived us."[1] This last sentence seems to have been added by Ser Ceccone; but the whole deposition merely proves that Savonarola had the fullest confidence in the goodness and sincerity of the disciple who now so basely betrayed him and vainly endeavoured to blacken his fame!

During this time several other friars of St. Mark's and many of Savonarola's lay friends, who were in the convent on the day of the attack, had been brought to trial.[2] All were subjected to torture[3] and minutely questioned as to

[1] *Vide* this trial in Appendix to the Italian edition, doc. xxviii.

[2] *Vide* Appendix to the Italian edition, the trials or depositions of the rest of the accused in doc. xxix.

[3] "And on the 27th day of April all the citizens arrested for this affair were put to torture; so that from the 15th hour to the evening continual shrieks arose from the Bargello" (Landucci, "Diario," p. 174).

what schemes were planned in St. Mark's, the weapons stored there, and so forth. In this way some fresh particulars were elicited, but absolutely nothing that could damage Savonarola, whose innocence, on the contrary, was still more clearly established. All affirmed that he was exclusively devoted to the contemplation of heavenly things, and never took part in any political intrigues. They added, that so great was their respect and veneration for him, that no one ventured to enter his cell, for fear of distracting him from the meditations in which he was continually absorbed.[1]

But when Savonarola's falsified confession was shown to the accused as a proof that he had denied the truth of his own prophecies and visions, some of them wavered in their faith. The monks in particular were easily betrayed into expressions of rage and indignation. Frà Roberto da Gagliano, who had been one of those most attached to Savonarola and his two companions, now implored the Signory on no account to let them return to the convent. But even at the height of his anger and excitement he was unable to conceal the great esteem and veneration he had previously felt for the master he now forsook, so that even his denunciations had the effect of a defence. "Having some learning as a theologian, I knew his doctrine to be sound and in nowise heretical. I could discern no fault in Frà Girolamo, but always beheld in him manifest signs of holiness, devotion, humility, and prayer, goodly words and excellent life and example, admirable conversation, sound, firm, and solid doctrine; so that I would have testified to these things at the risk of my life. But since he has so subtly feigned and deceived, I return

[1] Andrea Cambini states in his deposition, that even Valori "never ventured to enter Savonarola's cell when the Prior was engaged in study" (Appendix to the Italian edition, doc. xxix. No. 18).

thanks to God and your Excellencies for having opened our eyes." [1]

It is certain that the friars of St. Mark's behaved most contemptibly on this occasion. But we should remember that they were in an extremely difficult position, and that their faith was severely tried. To many of them, unfortunately, the new doctrine they professed was no vigorous outcome of a genuine belief, but was chiefly based on visions and prophecies. They had blindly desired, expected, nay, even positively counted on a miracle, and on seeing all hope of it disappear, knew not what to think. We can realize the cruel perplexity of their minds when we see that even Frà Benedetto, the faithful friend, heroic disciple, and unwearied defender of Savonarola, allowed himself to be overcome by doubt, and feeling—to use his own words—like a thrush when struck by a falling bough, hurried away to Viterbo.[2] But in his case quiet thought soon restored him to reason. On returning to Florence he minutely investigated facts, sought out genuine documents, questioned sincere witnesses, and becoming more and more confirmed in his old faith, persevered in it to the end of his life.[3] But all were not

[1] *Vide* in Appendix to the Italian edition Frà Roberto's examination at doc. xxix. No. 11.

[2] *Come tordo avuta la ramata*, Frà Benedetto, "Cedrus Libani," chap. x.

[3] Ibid. *Vide* also the particulars given by Padre Marchese concerning the life of Frà Benedetto, in the "Scritti varii." On the 19th of April Luca Landucci, in the hall of the Grand Council, at the moment when the false confession was read out and proclaimed not only to be genuine, but in Savonarola's own hand, was so much shaken in consequence, as to write the following passage in his "Diario" (p. 173): ". . . wherefore I was astonished, stupefied, and amazed. I felt grieved to the soul to behold so great an edifice overthrown, through being so sadly based on a lie. I hoped to see Florence made a new Jerusalem, and become a splendid law and example of virtuous living, and hoped to see the renovation of the Church, the conversion of infidels, and the consolation of the good; yet I heard all the contrary to this, and had to gulp down the dose: *In voluntate tua, Domine, omnia sunt posita.*"

endowed with a like spirit of generous constancy; and even as early as the 21st of April the friars of St. Mark's addressed a letter to the Pope, that is an indelible blot on their fame.

They prostrated themselves at the Holy Father's feet, and sought to throw all blame, whether true or supposed, on Savonarola's shoulders. But as all his accusers seemed unwittingly compelled to speak in his defence, so even this missive redounded to his praise. "Not merely ourselves," said the friars, "but likewise men of far greater talent, were deceived by Frà Girolamo's cunning. The fineness of his doctrine; the rectitude of his life; the holiness of his manners; his pretended devotion, and the good results he obtained by purging the city of immorality, usury, and every species of vice; the different events which confirmed his prophecies in a manner beyond all human power and imagination, and which were so numerous and of such a nature, that had he not made retractation himself, declaring that his words were not inspired by God, we should never have been able to renounce our faith in him. For so firm was our belief in him, that we were all most ready to go through the fire in support of his doctrine." They then asked to be absolved from the excommunication incurred by having been followers of Savonarola, and for having, some of them, borne arms on the day of the assault of the convent. Farther on in the letter, it is strange to find the friars supplicating the Holy Father to graciously preserve their congregation intact and separate from any other, under a vicar of their own. It was to maintain the independence of this very congregation that Savonarola had so strenuously fought, and it was for this cause that the Pope had afterwards excommunicated him and his convent. His friars now supported their request by the identical arguments urged by himself in the letter that had provoked so

tremendous an outburst of the Papal wrath. And they concluded by saying: "May it be enough for your Holiness to have seized the source and chief of all error, Frà Girolamo Savonarola; let him suffer condign punishment if there be any meet for wickedness such as his; and let us strayed sheep return to the true shepherd." [1]

This letter was carried to Rome by two friars furnished with warm recommendations from the Signory.[2] The Pope's reply was dated the 14th of May, and after praising the repentance of the friars, gave them his absolution, and promised to give careful consideration to the question of their independence, the which had been so often alternately granted and refused.[3] Meanwhile crowds of people were flocking to the Duomo, no longer, however, to be spell-bound by Savonarola's voice, but to enjoy the plenary indulgence conceded to all who had striven against him, regardless of the crimes or even murders they might have committed for this purpose.[4]

A most active correspondence was still going on between the Republic and the Pope. Alexander was insistently demanding that Savonarola, after being sufficiently examined and tortured, should be consigned to him alive; but the Signory felt that this could not be done without gravely compromising the dignity of the State. Accordingly they temporized with his Holiness, making fresh attempts to obtain the concession of the tax on Church property that had been so warmly advocated by Savonarola and been the cause of so many charges against him. The members of the Pratica agreed with the Signory in urging this request, but the Pope either kept silence on the subject, or took time to reflect, and the Florentines continued to press the demand. It appeared as though all were endeavouring to trade on the poor

[1] Perrens, doc. xviii. [2] Padre Marchese, doc. xxxv.
[3] Perrens, doc. xviii.
[4] Nardi, vol. i. pp. 154–155; Landucci, "Diario," p. 173.

Friar's life in order to gain in exchange for it the identical concessions he had been the first to ask, and which were now leading him to martyrdom.[1]

The moment was approaching for the election of a new Signory, and the Pratica met almost daily.[2] On the 27th and 28th of April the Signory in office asked the opinion of the meeting: as to what reply should be sent to the Pope; how to provide for the finances; and how to maintain order in the city?

And Vespucci, now the leading voice in the council, advised that they should continue to temporize with Rome, and prolong the examination of the three friars, so

[1] The reports of the "Pratiche," and other documents published by Padre Marchese and Gherardi, furnish clear proofs of all this. Many other measures Savonarola had proposed were adopted after his death, some even while he was being put to the torture. We have already spoken of the Church Tithes and the separation of St. Mark's, and may now repeat that he was the first to advocate the election of a perpetual Gonfalonier. He had also suggested the appointment of a foreign judge of appeal, as the first step to the formation of a *Ruota*, or court of wealthy citizens, who were also to be highly paid in order to ensure their incorruptibility. And on the 20th of April, that is, the day before the commencement of his second trial, a decree was issued (*vide* "Provvisione" 191, sheet 5, Florence Archives, cl. ii. dist. ii.) abolishing the office of Bargello, and re-establishing in its stead that of the Captain of the People, suppressed in 1477. The Captain's tribunal was to be the lower court of appeal, that of the Podestà the higher court. Meanwhile, however, the Bargello, or Captain of the Piazza, was to have an additional guard of thirty soldiers, until the new Captain of the People should come into office, and occupy the same palace next the Custom House, then tenanted by the Bargello. We cannot ascertain the exact purpose of this reform, which was not strictly identical with that advised by Savonarola, although, in fact, a new foreign judge of appeal was likewise appointed. It may be that the Signory wished to seem favourable to democratic laws, and feigned a reform that would lead to good results, while actually increasing the power of the Bargello, whose services would be needed for the execution of the sentences they had in view. At all events, it is certain that a *Ruota* on Savonarola's plan was afterwards established, composed of native judges, instead of the foreign Podestà and Captain.

[2] By Register 66 of the "Pratiche" in the Florence Archives, it appears that they were held on the 13th, 14th, 20th, 26th, 27th, and 28th of April, but that other meetings also took place.

as to leave their sentence to be decided by the incoming Signory, showing leniency meanwhile to the rest of the accused. That on all questions of finance and the preservation of order in the city, he would leave everything to the discretion of the present Signory.[1] The Government accordingly followed his advice, and terminated the other trials, by sentencing nineteen citizens to slight fines or partial banishment and exclusion from public offices for a short term of years; while to many others free pardon was accorded. As to those who had attacked the Piagnoni, and assassinated Valori and his family, they were not even brought to trial![2] And to prove the Government's love of freedom and hatred to the Medici, the sentence to outlawry as rebels, still in force against Alessandro and Lamberto dell' Antella, the discoverers of the Piero de' Medici plot, was entirely revoked.[3]

But there was another measure still to be taken in order to ensure the election of a new Signory thoroughly hostile to Savonarola; since otherwise the public laws and faith would have been violated in vain, and the torturing of the prisoner mere labour lost. If the Piagnoni should now return to power, Savonarola would not only be rescued, but avenged, and the iniquities of his trial proclaimed to the world. But all this proved very easy to prevent. On the day the Grand Council assembled for the election of the magistrates, by a new and incredible infringement of the law, a great number of the most

[1] *Vide* the above-mentioned Register of the "Pratiche," sheet 72 and fol.

[2] *Vide* Florence Archives, the deliberations of the 30th of April, 1498. Same Register, sheet 39[t] and fol.

[3] "Provvisione" of 23rd of April, 1498. It was carried in the Eighty by sixty black against twenty-three white beans; and in the Greater Council by 706 black against 305 white. The white beans, as all know, were used to mark disapproval. *Vide* in the Florence Archives, "Consigli Maggiori, Provissioni," Registers, cl. ii. dist. ii. 190, sheet 16.

popular citizens of Florence were excluded from the hall at the moment for taking the votes.[1] Thanks to this arbitrary proceeding, Messer Vieri de' Medici, a fit representative of his name,[2] was elected Gonfalonier of Justice, with a Signory of the same type as the last. The new magistrates found their work all laid out for them, and had only to pursue the same course and put the seal of bloodshed to the almost consummated crime.

Their first act, on assuming office, was to assemble the Pratica on the 5th of May, to consult as to what they were to do. Some made reply: "That it was requisite to impress upon the Pope that the sentence must be executed in the same place where the crime had been committed; but that should it prove expedient to yield on this point, an attempt should at least be made, by examining Savonarola anew, to extract all he had in his body, seeing that, up to this moment, they had only stripped off the rind." Then Piero Popoleschi began to speak in the name of the Ten, and as the Gonfalonier of the preceding Signory and the chief director of the trial, his words naturally carried great weight.[3] Like most of the majority, he insisted that the friars should on no account be consigned to Rome. It were preferable, he said, to ask the Pope to send commissioners of his own to examine Savonarola anew, if more information was to be extracted from him. But he vehemently opposed, and certainly not without reason, the proposal for a new trial, "both on account of the manner in

[1] Nardi (vol. i. p. 156) says that two hundred were thus excluded, but this must surely be an exaggeration.

[2] There were four Medici with the same Christian name, and one of them was actually a follower of Savonarola. The temper of the man now mentioned will be shown by the sequel.

[3] It will be remembered that the new Council of Ten had come into office at the beginning of the trial. Popoleschi had therefore been elected, while still holding the post of Gonfalonier—another act of monstrous illegality.

which the examination has been already conducted, and for the peace and quiet of the city; inasmuch as the renewal of those proceedings might arouse scandal, and also because all the potentates of Italy have written to the same effect." [1] Thus it was clear that the ex-Gonfalonier objected to another trial because he greatly feared that it would only result in bringing to light the falsification of the first. Nothing of that kind was to be dreaded if the matter were taken in hand by the Papal Commissioners. They would know their business too well; and being bound by no obligation to make their proceedings public, with the help of Ser Ceccone and the torture-chamber, would be perfectly able to achieve their intent.

On the evening of the same day (5th of April) the Signory wrote to Bonsi, now Savonarola's enemy, and on the following day to the Pope, repeating that they could not send the three friars to Rome, because they wished to make an example of them in Florence; and adding that it would be better that his Holiness should appoint his own Commissioners instead.[2] The Pope had always most strongly, and even threateningly, insisted on the friars being sent to Rome, so that he might pronounce their sentence himself. But his sole aim in this was to ensure their death. Accordingly, he no sooner perceived that the Florentines were bent on the same purpose, and in a position to carry it out, than he showed himself willing to come to terms, and had indeed already suggested to the ambassador how the matter could

[1] *Vide* this "Pratica" in the before-quoted Register, sheet 86'. It is also included in Lupi's published collection.

[2] P. Marchese, docs. xxxvi. and xxxvii. The second letter (dated 6th of May) begins thus: "Cum torqueremus adhuc Hieronymum Savonarolam proximis diebus," &c. These words are an additional proof, were any needed, that Savonarola was tortured on other days besides the 19th of April, stated to be the only time, in the report of the trial. But this report has been contradicted in many other ways.

be arranged.[1] On receipt of this last despatch from Florence, he wrote at once (11th of April) to Paganotti the bishop,[2] and on the following day to the Signory,[3] announcing that he should send to Florence the General of the Dominicans, Giovacchino Turriano, and the Doctor of Law, Francesco Romolino, "to examine into the crimes and iniquities of those three children of perdition." Also with a refinement of cruelty, he imposed on the Dominican bishop, who was regarded as a friend of Savonarola, the task of degrading him and handing him over to the secular arm. At the same time he granted Florence the much-desired tithe on church property for the term of three years. Accordingly the most faithful of the Piagnoni went about repeating: "This friar has been sold, like unto the Saviour, for thirty pieces of silver; for truly three times ten make thirty."[4] And meanwhile the Florentines were communicating with the different courts, in order to prepare men's minds for the final event. Having little confidence in Francesco Pepi, their orator at Milan, they appointed Messer Guidantonio Vespucci as his coadjutor.[5] It was still more difficult to manage Guasconi, their ambassador in France, who was not only known to be a zealous Piagnone, but high in the favour of King Louis XII. For, although in a far less degree than his predecessor, Charles VIII., this monarch also was well inclined towards Savonarola. Hence, while informing Guasconi "for the regulation of his conduct" of the events which had taken place in Florence, they enjoined him to keep absolute

[1] *Vide* Bonsi's letter in Gherardi, "Nuovi Documenti," pp. 168–169.

[2] Perrens, doc. xix. vol. i. p. 512.

[3] Gherardi, "Nuovi Documenti," p. 172.

[4] Landucci, "Diario," p. 175. The concession of the *Decima* arrived in Florence on the 13th of May, 1498.

[5] *Vide* the letter to Pepi of the 21st and 23rd of April, in Gherardi, "Nuovi Documenti," pp. 161–162.

silence on them at Court. But, without any attempt to hide the depth of his grief, he immediately replied that the king of France was already informed of everything, and was, in fact, hastening to appoint a new ambassador to Florence. He went on to say that, being worn out and broken by his great age (really by his great sorrow), he desired to be recalled without delay.[1] The Florentines also wrote to the other Courts, always adopting a tone suited to the temper of the potentate addressed, and meanwhile they lost no time in the city, but relentlessly pushed matters on to the predestined end.

And what of Savonarola during this time? The Apostolic Commissioners only arrived on the 19th of May, and ever since the 25th of April, after the second deposition had been signed, he had been left in peace in the solitude of his tower cell. For some days he was too bruised and torn to be able to use his arms; but the right hand, which was always somewhat spared during torture, so that the victim might write his own confession as was required by the law, soon began to improve. He was then enabled to resume his pen, and all that he wrote at this solemn time is deserving of special attention.

But the reader will find no attacks on his judges, no complaints of the barbarities inflicted on him, no attempt at self-defence. Savonarola had nothing more to hope in this world; his thoughts were exclusively given to God; he wrote an exposition and commentary of the Fiftieth Psalm, *Miserere mei Deus*. "Sinner that I be, where

[1] Gherardi, "Nuovi Documenti," pp. 157–160. The new envoy alluded to by Guasconi, was the Florentine Niccolò Alamanni. It seems that he was really charged by the king, though with no great earnestness, to endeavour to save Savonarola. He arrived before all was over, but found it was too late for any attempt in the prisoner's favour. The Signory feigned ignorance of his mission, but sent to ask him for certain valuable manuscripts formerly lent to him by Piero de' Medici, and they pressed their demand so rudely, that, as they had hoped, he soon departed in high dudgeon.

shall I turn? To the Lord, whose mercy is infinite. None may take glory in himself; all the saints tell us: not unto us, but unto the Lord be the glory. They were not saved by their own merits, nor their own works; but by the goodness and grace of God, wherefore none may take glory to himself. O Lord, a thousand times hast Thou wiped away my iniquity, yet a thousand times have I fallen back into it. . . . But when Thy spirit shall descend upon me, when Christ shall live within me; then shall I be safe. Strengthen me in Thy spirit, O Lord; not until then, can I teach Thy ways to the wicked. Hadst thou asked the sacrifice of my body, I would have given it ere now; but burnt-offerings are as nought to Thee; Thou wouldst have the offering of the spirit. Therefore, O sinner, bring thy repentant heart unto the Lord, and nought else shall be required of thee." He then recurred to his dominant idea of the renovation of the Church. "I ardently desire the salvation of all men; the works of the good would greatly console me. Wherefore, I beseech Thee, look on Thy Church, and behold how in these days more infidels than Christians are numbered in its fold, and how every one doth make a god of his belly. Send forth Thy spirit, and let the face of the earth be renewed. Hell is filled, Thy Church desolate. Arise; why sleepest Thou, O Lord? Our sacrifices find no favour in Thy sight, for they are mere ceremonies and unrighteous. Where be now the glory of the apostles, the fortitude of the martyrs, the holy simplicity of the monks?" . . . Continuing in this strain he seemed to forget his prison walls and believe himself once more in the pulpit. In reading this meditation one might almost conceive it to be one of Savonarola's most daring sermons; for, as Nardi justly said, he always remained equal to himself.[1]

[1] *Vide* "Esposizione sul Miserere." Audin de Rians cites in his bibliography of fifteenth century editions of Savonarola's works, eight Latin

Throughout this part of his "Esposizione" one might suppose that both visions and spirit of prophecy had entirely disappeared in prison; but a little further on we find that solitude was again inducing mental excitement; for his imagination becomes heated, and the harassed prisoner is haunted by the old apparitions.

His second composition at this period consisted of an exposition of the Thirtieth Psalm,[1] *In te, Domine, speravi.* In this Savonarola recounts the struggle between Despair and Hope contending for his heart. He does not describe the combatants as abstract or allegorical beings, but seems to hear first the clashing of chains and then the voices of the two angels; after which heaven opens before his eyes. "Despair hath pitched his camp around me, and encompassed me with a strong and numerous host; he hath filled my heart, and unceasingly warreth against me, with violence and clamour, by night and by day. My friends are arrayed under his banner, and become my foes. All things which I see, and all I hear, bear the device of Despair. . . . Wherefore, even as the sweetest thing seemeth bitter to the fever-stricken, so for me all is turned to bitterness and affliction. . . . But I will turn me to Heaven, and then Hope will come to my aid. Behold! already Despair quaileth beneath her glance! Now, let the world weigh on me as it will, let my enemies rise against me; my fear hath passed from me, for I have rested all my hope in the Lord. Peradventure, O Lord, Thou wilt not grant my prayer to be released from bodily anguish, for such grace might be hurtful to the soul, inasmuch as virtue gains strength in tribulation. Then shall I be

and five Italian editions of this pamphlet. Even more are enumerated in the Guicciardini Catalogue. The "Esposizione" was originally written in Latin.

[1] Audin de Rians cites five Italian and one Latin edition of this second pamphlet. This also was originally composed in Latin, and translated immediately afterwards.

temporally confounded by men; their strength and power shall be arrayed against me; but Thou dost permit it, for that I be not confounded in eternity." Then a passage follows that is specially worthy of note, since it was chiefly this or some other entirely analogous part of the exposition that served the Protestants as the basis of their theory that Savonarola was one of the martyrs of their Church.

"Wherefore, I will put my hope in the Lord, and He will haste to deliver me from all tribulation. And by whose merits? Not by mine, O Lord, but by Thine. I offer not up my justice to Thee, but I seek Thy mercy. The Pharisees took pride in their justice; wherefore it was not the justice of God, the which is only to be attained by grace; and no one will ever be justified in God's sight for solely performing the works of the law." At this point the phantom of Despair appears, with such clashing of arms and sounding of trumpets, that Savonarola says: "Hardly could I keep myself from falling to earth; and he would have bound me fast in his chains and led me to his kingdom, had not Hope appeared to me all radiant and shining with a heavenly splendour, and smilingly cried: 'Oh! Knight of Christ, what is thy mind in this battle? . . . Hast thou faith or hast it not?' 'Yes, I have faith.' 'Well, then, know that this is a great grace of God, for faith is His gift, and is not to be attained by our works, lest any one should take glory to himself.'"

It has been found easy to conclude from this passage that Savonarola here intended to maintain the theory of justification by faith alone and the merits of Jesus Christ, and not by works, the which theory is the basis of the reformed doctrine. But before accepting this verdict we must remember that, according to the Protestant, as well as the Catholic point of view, salvation is attained by faith which is the gift of grace. The sole difference consists

in determining the manner in which human free-will can contribute to salvation. The Catholics maintain that good works and outward ceremonies are of great importance, and that free-will contributes to salvation. The Protestants, on the other hand, declare works and ceremonies to be utterly useless, and that all depends upon faith and grace : faith being derived from grace, and good works from faith. In other words, we are saved by grace alone; our own will is altogether powerless, the salvation of the elect is predestined. This once established, all may understand how easy it is to claim as a Protestant every Catholic writer who dwells on the omnipotence of faith, the necessity of grace, and the small value of our own works and merits. But it is only by piercing to the core of these doctrines, and investigating them in their intrinsic unity, that we can accurately judge them. No one can give any real attention to Savonarola's writings without quickly discerning how great a value he assigned to human free-will, and how firmly persuaded he was of the necessity of contributing of our own will to prepare ourselves for the reception of grace. He gives great importance to good works, and no less to outer ceremonies, although he would only have them used to open and stimulate the spirit. But who can feel surprise if in these days of solitary imprisonment, crippled by torture, forsaken and betrayed by his fellow-men, he should have neglected to dwell on the gifts of human free-will, and rather preferred to place his sole hope in the Lord? Nevertheless, on reading the continuation of this second "Esposizione," none can be deceived as to the real character of his doctrines.

Savonarola continues thus : "Despair assailed me and said: Seest thou not that thou callest on heaven and earth, yet none cometh to thy aid? Seest thou not that death is thy only refuge? And all his host cried

aloud, wherefore shedding tears of grief, I fell upon my face. And thereupon Hope, all shining and full of splendour, quickly descended from heaven, and, touching me, raised me from the earth and said: How long wilt thou be as a child? Let Despair point, if he can, to any sinner, however hardened, who, having turned to God and repented, hath not been accepted and justified."[1] . . . "Who is he that putteth bounds to the mercy of God, and thinketh to bear the waters of the ocean in his hands? Hast thou not heard the Lord say: when the sinner repenteth and turneth away from his sins, I will no more remember his iniquities?[2] . . . God's mercy is boundless. Didst thou fall? Rise up, and mercy shall receive thee. Wast thou ruined? Cry, and mercy shall come to thee." It is clear from this that man's works and free-will have a recognized value, according to the Catholic creed. And after this Savonarola went on to say: Then, full of gladness, I exclaimed: I will put no trust in men, but only in the Lord, and will return thanks before all the people, for the death of saints is precious in the Lord's sight. If all the hosts of the world be arrayed against me, my heart shall know no fear, for Thou art my refuge and wilt lead me to my end." . . . But at this point he was compelled to cease writing from lack of paper.

These two prison meditations obtained an enormous celebrity at the time. That on the *Miserere* soon ran into thirteen separate editions, and even circulated through Germany; and the fame of both was afterwards greatly increased when republished by Martin Luther at Stras-

[1] If there be no sinner who on returning to God hath not been accepted, their salvation is at least begun by free-will. Calvin was opposed to this doctrine, and Luther by no means admitted it in his "De Servo Arbitrio."

[2] These words of Scripture are quoted and insisted upon even by Protestants, since they unite with Catholics in believing in the infinite mercy of God; but Savonarola quotes the text in order to prove that it is needful for man to *will* to be saved, adding that if he have this *will*, God shall assuredly come to his aid.

burg in 1524, with a preface in which he declared Savonarola to be a precursor of the Protestant doctrine and one of the martyrs of the Reformation.[1] "This man was put to death," so wrote Luther, "solely for having desired that some one should come to purify the slough of Rome. It was the Antichrist's (the Pope's) hope that all remembrance of this great man would perish under a load of malediction; but thou seest that it still lives and that his memory is blessed. Jesus Christ proclaims him a saint through our lips, even though Pope and Papists should burst with rage. Even by these writings thou shalt see how works are of no avail in God's sight, and how faith is the one thing needful. What if some theological mud be still found sticking to his feet,[2] who could be altogether free of it in those days? Thou wilt likewise see his distrust and despair of his own strength, and a pure image of faith and hope in God's mercy. Neither in the strength of his vows nor the rule of his Order, neither in his priestly robe, in masses nor in works, did he rest his hope, but solely in the Gospel, in faith, and in righteousness." It is quite true, and also perfectly natural, that, in those solemn moments, Savonarola despaired of himself, and put his sole and whole trust in God. Nevertheless it is absolutely false that he ever renounced or neglected to maintain the value of those good works and religious ceremonies, of which, on the contrary, he was apt to exaggerate the importance almost to the point of superstition. Even if all we have said were insufficient to overthrow the verdict of the great Reformer, Savonarola's last acts, and the last words he was able to write in prison, would amply suffice to that end. Had Martin

[1] "Meditatio pia et erudita Hieronymi Savonarolæ a Papæ exusti, super Psalmos," Miserere Mei *et* In te Domine operavi. Argentorati, an. MDXXIIII.

[2] *I.e.*, scholastic mud.

Luther been acquainted with them they would have certainly removed all doubt from his mind.

Like all who came in contact with Savonarola, his jailer was soon inspired with a deep veneration for him, and repeatedly besought him for the gift of some written words on virtuous living. After often excusing himself on account of his tortured joint and lack of paper, the Prior ended by granting the man's request, and wrote on a book cover, a *Rule for virtuous living*,[1] that was religiously preserved and afterwards appeared in print. "Virtuous living," Savonarola wrote, "depends wholly on grace; wherefore we must strive to attain grace, and, having won, to increase it. To examine our sins, to meditate on the vanity of earthly things, are means towards grace; *confession and communion incline our hearts to receive it.* Certainly it is a free gift of God, but when we have a strong contempt for the world, a strong desire to turn us to spiritual things, then we may say that even if grace be not yet in us, it is assuredly drawing nigh. *Therefore, perseverance in virtuous living, in good works, in confession, in communion, in all that draweth us nearer unto grace, is the true and certain way to procure its increase.*" If any should fail to recognize that this doctrine is purely and exclusively Roman Catholic, and that Savonarola remained steadfastly true to his creed to the close of his life, it would be impossible to find other proofs by which to convince him. But we might beg our disputant to note the Prior's last steps towards the scaffold, for then none, save the mentally blind, could preserve the shadow of a doubt on the subject.

[1] "Regola del ben viviere cristiano, composta mentre era in carcere," &c. Florence, 1498, 1529; Venice, 1547.

# CHAPTER XI.

*SAVONAROLA IS PUT TO FRESH TORTURE BY THE APOSTOLIC COMMISSIONERS. HIS THIRD TRIAL AGAIN PROVES HIM INNOCENT. THE CONDEMNATION AND EXECUTION OF THE THREE FRIARS.*

(MAY 19–23, 1498.)

THE Papal Commissioners entered Florence in state on the 19th of May. They consisted of Giovacchino Turriano, General of the Dominicans, and the Spaniard Francesco Romolino, Bishop of Ilerda, Auditor to the Governor of Rome, and afterwards well known as the Cardinal Romolino. The dregs of the people flocked round them with cries of "Death to the Friar!" And Romolino smilingly replied: "He shall die without fail." In fact, Girolamo Benivieni was in receipt of letters from Rome informing him that "The two Commissioners were instructed to put Savonarola to death *were he even another St. John the Baptist.*"[1] And they made no secret of this, for Romolino was scarcely established in the house of a certain Pandolfo della Luna, near San Pietro Scheraggio, than he said to his host: "We shall make a fine bonfire; I bear the sentence with me, already prepared."[2]

[1] "Vita Latina," sheet 60; Burlamacchi, p. 154.

[2] Ibid. sheet 60.

The following day, 20th of May, the torturers were in waiting, and Savonarola was subjected to a third examination. In addition to the Papal Commissioners, it was attended by Paolo Benini and Biagio di Giovanni for the Gonfaloniers of the Guilds; by Giovanni Canacci for the Twelve Worthies; by Piero degli Alberti for the Ten; and by Francesco Pucci for the Eight. As Ser Ceccone had performed his work so badly before, he was now given several coadjutors to assist him in framing his reports, so that emulation might sharpen his wits and enable him to falsify the prisoner's replies in the manner required.

The examiners tortured the poor Friar most pitilessly;[1] and the first questions they asked him related to the council, and more particularly as to his accomplices in the attempt. Savonarola said: "I will plainly tell you that I advised with no one on the matter of the council, and only spoke of it in these last days to one or two of my brethren. I have never had any communication with the princes of Italy, inasmuch as I considered them all as my foes. Nevertheless I hoped that the foreign rulers would favour the undertaking, on account of the evil conduct of the Roman Court, and had especial hope in the King of England, from having heard that he was a good man. As to the cardinals and prelates, I regarded them all as my enemies." Being asked whether he had caused secrets of the confessional to be revealed to him, he instantly replied: "that he had never made any such

[1] "But even this small first draft of his examination by Romolino was also written thus briefly by Ser Ceccone and others who were present at the said examination" (Violi, "Giornata Scota"). It is here and there expressly stated in the report, that even Romolino's secretary noted down the replies; and Frà Benedetto, in quoting an extract from them, remarks: "Let it not irk thee to read (I pray thee) some of the formal words traced by Ser Lodovico Menchi" ("Vulnera Diligentis," part iii. chap. 3, at sheet 6[t]). *Vide* the third trial in Appendix to the Italian edition, doc. xxvi.

request, nor would it have been granted by his friars." Beginning to see that nothing was to be obtained from the prisoner, Romolino now became furious, and assailed him with threats; but finding menaces of no avail, immediately ordered Savonarola to be once more put to the question. Thereupon the Friar turned to those present and emphatically said: "Now hearken to my words and bear me witness, ye Signory of Florence! I have denied my Divine light from fear of torment. If I must perforce suffer, I will suffer for the truth; all that I have declared hath come to me from God." While thus speaking he was being stripped and replaced on the rack; but these words were so clearly and firmly pronounced that they were noted down almost *verbatim*.[1] In the agony of torture Savonarola's mind again wandered, and the vague replies then extorted from him were quickly changed by the notary. But on all essential points of doctrine neither tortures nor falsifications availed to obscure his meaning. He was asked if he had ever sought to make a division in the Christian Church, and instantly, as though roused from delirium, he gave the answer: "Never, unless your demand is meant to refer to certain ceremonies by which I enforced discipline among my

[1] Here are the words as they stand in part iii. of the "Vulnera Diligentis" (Cod. cit., sheet 7), and which Frà Benedetto states to be taken from one of the copies in Ser Ceccone's hand, and that, although falsified in the usual manner, shows several divergences from the later, and still more mutilated, version given in the Appendix to the Italian edition: "*Jussus expoliari.* Now hearken to my words, O God! Thou hast detected me. Here he fell on his knees, saying: I confess that I have denied Christ. I have spoken lies. O Signory of Florence, I have denied Him from dread of torture. If I have to suffer, I will suffer for the truth. That which I have said came to me from God. O God, Thou dost impose penance on me for having denied Thee. I deserve it. I have denied Thee, I have denied Thee, I have denied Thee for fear of torments, for fear of torments! He was on his knees, and, showing his almost shattered left arm, cried: Jesus, aid me; this time Thou hast found out my sin." All this, it is evident, is always in reference to the light of prophecy, the point on which Savonarola had given way.

friars. But it is entirely true that excommunication had no terrors for me." [1]

On the 21st the proceedings recommenced with certain strangely contradictory declarations, intended to confirm all that had been transcribed at the preceding examinations. To these Savonarola's name had been affixed, but by whose hand is unknown. Their contents are too void of sense to have any value, and indeed all the minutes of this third trial are utterly worthless, being even more falsified than the others, so that it is difficult to believe that even one genuine reply is contained in them. And although, according to the text, they were signed by Savonarola, neither his name nor those of the witnesses are to be found at the conclusion. So shameless were the Friar's persecutors that they no longer made even a pretence of observing legal forms. They continued to ply him with innumerable strange and ridiculous demands, as, for example: "If he had ever maintained that Jesus Christ was only a man." To which Savonarola replied: "Only a fool could ask that." Then they inquired "whether he believed in charms?" [2] And he rejoined: "I always

[1] In these, as in all the other minutes of Savonarola's trial, it may be taken for granted that the only genuine and untouched depositions are those which are in favour of the accused, for certainly these would not have been invented either by the examiners or the notary.

[2] As we have already mentioned, Violi and Frà Benedetto are able to supply a few questions and answers not contained in the report as it has been preserved, for through the wife of Ser Ceccone they contrived to obtain the original draft written in the notary's own hand. But even this was not the genuine deposition, since some alterations were made even in the act of noting down the replies, and additional changes were interpolated in every subsequent copy. Frà Benedetto found by the rough draft that Savonarola had been asked "whether he had ever committed sodomy"; but this is entirely omitted from the copy we possess. On this head Frà Benedetto expresses himself as follows: "The thing is even truer than I say, and I have it not from a third copy, but have myself read it in the original, *i.e.*, in the first rough draft Ser Ceccone made in noting down the heads of what was said by Frà Hieronimo." Then he adds farther on, that he got this first rough draft into his hands by the aid of Ser Ceccone's wife. Frà Benedetto, "Vulnera Diligentis,"

made mock of them." Romolino once more recurred to the affair of the council, in order to learn who had favoured the plan, and particularly whether the Cardinal of Naples had been concerned in it. He asked the same question again and again, using promises, threats, and torture, until at last, after a thousand denials of having negotiated or consulted with any one on the matter, Savonarola cried, almost maddened with pain: "Naples! Naples! I took counsel with him and others." But on the 22nd, when they began to question him for the third time, his first thought was to retract all that he had said to the injury of others when raving in anguish, and instantly declared: "Neither with the Cardinal of Naples, nor with others, have I spoken any word of the council." Romolino then understood that nothing more was to be extracted from him; that neither by tortures nor the devices of the notaries could sufficient evidence be gained to justify his condemnation, and that no more time need be wasted in the attempt. Accordingly, after a few more hasty questions, he summoned Savonarola to appear before him the following day to receive his sentence. "I am a prisoner," replied the friar; "I will come if my jailers bring me."

But all was not over. Day was closing, the vesper bell ringing the hour of sunset, and Savonarola engaged in quiet meditation, when five citizens suddenly broke into his cell. They came with the notary to see whether, by surprising him at this last moment, when so exhausted by mental and bodily anguish, it might not be possible to conquer him by threats. They wished to question him on political matters, and extort something more than was to be gleaned from his first deposition, the only one that had been published, and that was altogether unsuited to their purpose. Savonarola, however, calmly reiterated his

bk. ii. chaps. 16, 17, 18; Violi, "Giornate." *Vide* Appendix to the Italian edition, docs. xxi. and xxii.

previous declaration : "I left all details to Valori. The chief objects my friends had in view were that the majority of the council should consist of men favourable to the popular government ; to deal severely with our opponents when they committed crimes ; to keep the people strong and united, not for purposes of offence, but in order to resist attack.".[1]

Thus ended the third trial, of which the Apostolic Commissioners had little reason to be proud. After all their promises, their attempts to prove Savonarola guilty had utterly failed, for his innocence was plainer than before. Hence, this final examination was neither printed, signed, nor read to the public ;[2] and was left unfinished. The examiners kept it concealed, and only allowed one or two copies of it to be circulated among the Italian Courts.[3]

But notwithstanding the failure of their attempt, the Apostolic Commissioners met on the same day (22nd of May) to consult as to the fate of the three monks. The question was soon settled. As to Savonarola and Frà Silvestro, no discussion was required : their death was a foregone conclusion. Wishing, however, to lighten in some degree the gloomy impression this sentence might

[1] *Vide* the third trial, in Appendix to the Italian edition, doc. xxvi.

[2] As we have said, Savonarola underwent examination on the 20th, 21st, and 22nd, and twice on the last day : *i.e.*, at the 13th and again at the 24th hour. The first interrogatory is not signed either by Savonarola, the witnesses, or the notary. But in the second, after Savonarola's first reply, we find this statement : "After these words, Frà Girolamo subscribed to all he had said yesterday and that had been noted down by the secretary of Messer Francesco Romolino, signing himself thus : 'I. Frà Jeronimo of Ferrara.'" The second interrogatory is then continued and ended without any signature. The first interrogatory of the third day ends with these words : "The prisoner again affixed his signature to the deposition transcribed by Messer Francesco, and containing all the things written above." Nevertheless it was left unsigned. The final interrogatory breaks off suddenly. The minutes were circulated in this form.

[3] We found in Milan the copy sent to Duke Ludovico.

produce on the public, Romolino proposed that Frà Domenico's life should be spared. But when it was remarked by one of the citizens present "that all Savonarola's doctrines would be kept alive by this friar," Romolino instantly said: "A vile friar more or less matters little; let this one also die." [1]

During these days a very select Pratica had been likewise held, for the discussion of the sentence. One member only, named Agnolo Niccolini, raised his voice in Savonarola's defence, saying that he thought it a very grave crime to put to death a man of such excellent qualities, whose like was scarcely to be found once in a hundred years. "This man," he added, "would not only succeed in restoring faith to the world, if all were extinct, but in diffusing the learning with which he is so richly endowed. Hence, I would advise ye to keep him in prison if ye choose; but preserve his life and grant him the use of writing materials, so that the world may not lose the fruits of his learning." But Niccolini's words were very ill received by the assembly, and his proposal was immediately negatived, "because no one could count on future signories, as they were changed every two months. The Friar would most certainly be restored to liberty, and again cause disturbance in the city. A dead enemy fights no more." [2] It was in this fashion that the man, whose innocence had been only more clearly proved by prolonged examination and torture, and his two equally guiltless companions were condemned to death! Even the examiners themselves had been compelled to testify to the innocence of Frà Domenico; and Frà Silvestro, who had denied his master, could be found guilty of no crime punishable by the law.

[1] Burlamacchi, pp. 151–52; "Vita Latina," sheet 60.

[2] Burlamacchi, pp. 151–52; "Vita Latina," sheet 60. No report of this Pratica is to be found in the Archives.

The sentence was read to the prisoners the same evening, so that they might have time to prepare for their last hour. Frà Silvestro appeared to be crushed by it; whereas Frà Domenico received it as a joyful announcement. The approach of certain death roused this noble soul to enthusiasm. He immediately asked to what kind of death they were condemned, and on learning that they were to be first hanged and then burnt, begged and almost implored that he might be burnt alive, so as to endure harder martyrdom for the cross of Christ. He then asked for food, in order to be able to sleep quietly, and face death with greater composure. Shortly before, feeling already assured of his fate, he had written a farewell letter to the brethren of San Domenico of Fiesole, of whom he was Prior, and we cannot refrain from transcribing his words.

"*Fratres dilectissimi et desideratissimi in visceribus Jesu Christi.* It being God's will that we die for Him, pray for us, ye that are left, bearing in mind my injunctions to remain humble, united in charity, and diligently occupied in religious exercises. Pray God for us, particularly during the services of the church when ye are assembled together in the choir. Let my body be buried in some most lowly spot, not within the church, but outside, in some corner near the door. And offer up prayers for me, saying masses *et cætera solita;* and I, being where I hope to be, will do as much for ye. Kiss all the brethren for me, both of your convent and of St. Mark's, and especially our well-beloved brethren at Fiesole, *quorum nomina in corde fixa ante Deum porto.* Have all the pamphlets of Frà Girolamo in our cell collected together, have them bound, and place one copy in the library. And let another copy be kept to read at the second table of the refectory, but let it be fastened thereon by a chain, so that

even the lay brothers may sometimes peruse it there." [1] Thus his last thoughts were given to the perpetuation of his master's doctrines! The world can boast few examples of similar faith and constancy.

When the messengers entered Savonarola's prison to communicate the sentence, they found him kneeling in prayer. On hearing the fatal announcement he expressed neither grief nor joy, but continued his devotions with increased fervour. Shortly afterwards, food was offered to him, but he refused it, saying that his soul needed more strengthening than his body, and that he wished to keep his mind clear and well prepared for death. Just then a man came into the cell, dressed in black, and with his face hidden under a cowl. It was Jacopo Niccolini, a *Battuto* [2] of the Company of the Temple, an association formed for the purpose of comforting the last moments of the condemned. When Niccolini asked Savonarola if there were anything he specially desired, the latter besought him to obtain from the Signory the boon of a short interview with his two fellow-sufferers, to whom he craved to say a few words before death. Niccolini showed great willingness to undertake this pious office, and sought the Signory without delay. Then came one of the black brethren of St. Benedict to receive the prisoner's confession, and Savonarola, meekly kneeling before him, fulfilled all the duties of religion with much fervour. It was the same with the two other friars.[3]

[1] This letter is given in Burlamacchi, p. 155, and is translated in the "Vita Latina," sheet 61[t]. Another Italian copy of it is to be found at the close of the manuscript collection of documents (Riccardi Library, No. 2053) forming a species of appendix to the "Vita Latina." Save at one or two points where the Riccardi Codex seemed to give the best reading, we have adhered to Burlamacchi's version as the most correct on the whole.

[2] The *Battuti* were so-called because they were accustomed to scourge themselves in penance for their sins.

[3] Burlamacchi, p. 155.

Meanwhile the Signory were engaged in discussing the request of which Niccolini was the bearer: for they were still in dread of some extraordinary and unexpected action on the part of Savonarola. But the kindly messenger succeeded in convincing them that there was nothing to be feared from a fettered man, with one foot, as it were, already in the grave; and that it was always the custom to gratify the last wishes of the condemned. Accordingly the prisoners were granted an interview of one hour in the hall of the Greater Council.

It would be very difficult to describe the emotions of the three friars on finding themselves once more together. It was their first meeting after more than forty days of imprisonment and torture; after each one of them had been given to understand that the others had made full retractation, and after both Frà Domenico and Frà Silvestro had been shown the false depositions attributed to Savonarola. But no explanation was possible at this moment; they had only to prepare to meet death with brotherly courage. The mere presence of Savonarola was enough to instantly restore his ascendancy over his companions. At first sight of that severe and tranquil countenance every doubt vanished from his disciples' minds, and their old faith in him was renewed. There was not a moment to be lost, and accordingly he promptly addressed Frà Domenico and said: "I know that you ask to be cast alive into the fire; but it is not well, since it is not meet for us to choose what death we would die. How can we know whether we shall find strength to bear that to which we are condemned? This dependeth not on ourselves, but on the grace that shall be granted us of the Lord." Then turning to Frà Silvestro with greater severity, he said to him: "Regarding you, I know that you would fain protest your innocence in sight of the people. I command you to abandon this idea, and rather to follow

the example of our Lord Jesus Christ, who refrained from declaring His innocence, even on the cross." The two friars made no reply, but after kneeling before their superior, and devoutly receiving his blessing, were led back to their respective prisons. Savonarola had rightly judged that all external demonstrations of feeling, by word or deed, would have rendered their death less impressive and less Christian; that at so supreme a moment all thoughts and feelings should be fixed upon God—and therefore preferred to let the meeting end thus. Now that his disciples showed the greatest readiness to obey him, he had only to prepare to face death firmly and well.[1]

The night was already far spent when he returned to his cell; and he was so overcome by drowsiness and fatigue that, having leant his head on Niccolini's lap for a moment in token of gratitude and affection, he at once fell into a light slumber, and so great was the serenity of his mind that his placid countenance wore a smile as if beholding pleasant visions in his sleep. But he soon awoke, seemed surprised with himself, and as a further mark of gratitude to his benevolent companion, spoke to him prophetically of the future calamities of Florence. It is said that he also added these words: "Bear well in mind that these things will come to pass when there shall be a Pope named Clement." This prophecy, which he is supposed to have previously delivered on other occasions, was noted down and preserved until 1529, when it seemed to be exactly verified by the siege of Florence. Then the Piagnoni brought it forth and went about showing it to the wondering people. So, at least, runs the tale as it has been transmitted to us by the elder biographers.[2]

[1] Burlamacchi, pp. 156–57: "Vita Latina," sheet 60; Violi, Frà Benedetto, &c.

[2] Burlamacchi, pp. 157 and 193, Benivieni, and many other writers, in enumerating the prophecies of Savonarola, dwell minutely on this, alleging that it was shown to the perpetual Gonfalonier, Soderini, before

The three friars passed the rest of the night in continual devotion, and again met in the morning to receive the sacrament. Savonarola had been granted permission to officiate, and on raising the Host pronounced the following prayer as a final exposition of his creed :—"O Lord, I acknowledge Thee to be the perfect, invisible Trinity, the Three in One, Father, Son, and Holy Ghost ; I acknowledge Thee to be the Eternal Word, and that Thou didst descend into Mary's womb, and didst mount the Cross to shed Thy blood for our sins. I pray Thee that by Thy blood I may gain remission of my sins, and implore Thee to forgive them ; and likewise to grant Thy pardon for every offence or hurt brought on this city ; and for every error I may have unwittingly committed." [1] Having made this full and explicit declaration of faith, he took the communion himself, and administered it to both his companions. Shortly afterwards the guards appeared to lead them to the Piazza.

Three platforms had been erected on the steps of the Ringhiera. That nearest to the Palace door was assigned to the Bishop of Vasona ; [2] the second, on the Bishop's right,

the siege took place ; and adding many particulars to prove the truth of their tale. On this head the reader may also refer to Padre Marchese, "Documento" xlii., loc. cit., p. 194. It is certain that Savonarola had frequently announced the future calamities of Florence, and in a manner that a great number of persons held to be truly prophetic. But that he should have positively foretold the name of the Pope in whose reign these predictions would be fulfilled, seems scarcely credible. Unless we suppose the name to have been added later by devout believers in the Friar, it can only be regarded as a curious coincidence.

[1] This prayer is given in Burlamacchi, p. 158, and was also printed together with the "Esposizione del Miserere."

[2] Ubaldini, in his Chronicle, styles this Bishop "Frater Benedictus Christophori de Opera, vulgo dictus de Pagagnoctis ex parte matris, episcopus Vasoniensis." And he adds : "Fuit saffraganeus archiepiscopi florentini pluribus annis." He was a Dominican, and was elected Bishop of Vasona (Vaison in France, Department of Vaucluse) in 1482. Rinaldo Orsini was Archbishop of Florence in 1498, but resided almost continually in Rome.

to the Apostolic Commissioners; the third, near the Marzocco, to the Gonfalonier and the Eight. From this point a long, raised scaffold had been built out, a man's height from the ground, and stretching across a quarter of the Piazza in the direction of the Tetto dei Pisani. A stout beam stood upright at the end of this scaffold, with another nailed across it near the top. Thus the gibbet bore the form of a cross, although the upper part had been purposely shortened to lessen the resemblance. Three halters and three chains hung from its arms, the first to hang the friars, the second to keep their corpses suspended over the fire in which they were to be consumed. Heaps of combustibles were piled at the foot of the stake, and the guards of the Signory found great difficulty in keeping back the surging multitude who pressed round the scaffold. The throng scarcely seemed greater than on the day of the ordeal, but it wore a very different aspect.[1] A sad and solemn silence prevailed, and even those who had most longed to see this day were oppressed by a strange sense of fear. Yet amid the general agitation many different passions were stirring the crowd. There were Bigi, Piagnoni, and Arrabbiati; devout men, constant attendants on the Friar's sermons, now stood side by side with the reckless crew who had attempted his life with daggers and stones. Many writers were also present whose chronicles and diaries contain lasting records of that memorable day. What thoughts must have passed through their minds, it is easier for the reader to imagine than for us to describe.

Meanwhile some of the populace had succeeded in forcing their way close to the gibbet, and their blasphe-

[1] From an old, but not contemporary, picture of the scene, by an unknown painter of little merit, many copies of which are to be found in Florence, it might be supposed that there was very little crowd on the Piazza; but the chroniclers assert, and most probably with truth, that the whole Piazza was thronged. *Vide* Burlamacchi, p. 162.

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mies, indecent cries, and the fierce joy with which they awaited the crowning horror of the scene, made them resemble wild beasts rather than human beings. They consisted, for the most part, of men newly released from exile or prison who had been punished for their crimes by the past Signory and freed by the magistrates now in power simply because of the hatred they professed to Savonarola and his followers.

The three friars were already standing on the palace steps when a Dominican of Santa Maria Novella ordered them to be stripped of their robes, and brought forth covered only by their woollen tunics, barefooted, and with their hands bound. Savonarola was deeply moved by this unexpected demand; nevertheless he courageously despoiled himself of his gown, exclaiming, before giving it up: "Holy gown, how dearly did I long to wear thee! Thou wert granted me by God's grace, and I have ever kept thee unstained. Now I forsake thee not, but am bereft of thee." [1]

On reaching the first platform they found themselves in the presence of the Bishop of Vasona. He had obeyed the Pope's mandate, but now appeared overwhelmed with confusion. He dared not raise his eyes to the serene countenance of the man whom he had once called master, and who now seemed to stand before him rather as a judge than a criminal. Nevertheless the terrible and almost funereal ceremony had now to be performed. The three friars were again clothed in their monkish robes, in order to be stripped of them afresh after being formally degraded. When about to pronounce their degradation, the Bishop took Savonarola by the arm; but no longer

[1] Burlamacchi, p. 158; and Pico. Frà Benedetto quotes the same words in part iii. of his "Vulnera Diligentis." On all these last events reference may be made to the "Vita Latina;" Frà Benedetto, "Cedrus Libani;" Nardi, i. p. 158 and fol.; Violi, "Giornate."

able to maintain his composure, and forgetting the usual formula, instead of merely separating him from the Church Militant, he said, in faltering tones: "*Separo te ab Ecclesia militante atque triumphante.*" Thereupon Savonarola calmly set him right, saying: "*Militante, non triumphante: hoc enim tuum non est.*" [1] And these words were uttered in a tone that pierced to the souls of the bystanders, so that all who heard remembered them for ever.

When thus degraded and unfrocked, the three friars, only covered by their tunics, were delivered over to the secular arm, and led before the Apostolic Commissioners to hear the sentence proclaiming them schismatics and heretics. After this, Romolino with ghastly irony absolved them from all sin, and asked if they accepted his absolution. Whereupon they bowed their heads in token of assent. They were then led before the Eight, who, according to custom, put the sentence to the vote and carried it unanimously. But one of the Eight, Francesco Cini, was absent, having refused to take any part in so iniquitous a proceeding. The sentence [2] was immediately read to the prisoners, and ran as follows: "The Eight, having maturely considered the depositions of the three friars, and the atrocious crimes committed by them, the which are therein laid bare, and having considered the sentence pronounced by the Commissioners of the Pope, who have now handed them over to the secular arm to be punished, hereby decree: that each of the three be hung from the gibbet, and then burnt, so that their souls be entirely parted from their bodies." [3]

[1] Burlamacchi, p. 159; "Vita Latina," sheet 62; Picus, "Vita," p. 91; "Vulnera Diligentis," part iii.; Nardi, i. 161.

[2] The sentence begins as follows: "Presentes spectabiles domini Octo viri Reipublicæ Florentinæ, in sufficienti numero congregati, servatis servandis, et obtendo partito, absente tamen Francisco Cini eorum collega."

[3] *Vide* the sentence in Appendix to the Italian edition, doc. xxx.

With firm steps and tranquil hearts the victims then mounted the scaffold. Even Frà Silvestro showed courage at the last, and in the presence of death seemed again a worthy disciple of his master. Savonarola himself appeared endued with superhuman strength, never losing, even for an instant, the calm required to meet his terrible fate in a Christian frame of mind. While he and his companions, all three barely covered by their tunics, with naked feet and arms bound, were being slowly led from the ringhiera to the gibbet, the dregs of the populace were allowed to assail them with vile words and viler acts. Savonarola endured this bitter martyrdom with unshaken serenity. One bystander, stirred with compassion, approached him and said a few comforting words, to which he benignantly replied: "At the last hour, God alone can give mortals comfort." A certain priest, named Nerotto, asked him, "In what spirit dost thou bear this martyrdom?" He said: "The Lord hath suffered so much for me." He then kissed the crucifix, and his voice was heard no more.[1]

Frà Domenico was apparently quite unconscious of the general turmoil around him, and truly—

"*Parea che a danza e non a morte andasse.*"[2]

For he was so excited that he wished to intone the Te Deum in a loud voice, but refrained at the pressing instance of the *Battuti* who walked by his side, and said to them: "Accompany me then, in a whisper," and thus they all recited it together. He afterwards added: "Keep this well in mind: that the prophecies of Frà Girolamo will all be fulfilled, and that we die innocent."[3]

[1] Burlamacchi, pp. 159–160; Pico; Frà Benedetto.
[2] Leopardi. (To dance, and not to death his steps seemed bound.)
[3] Burlamacchi, Barsanti, &c.

The first ordered to mount the fatal ladder was Frà Silvestro. With the halter about his neck he had just time to cry, before being thrust off: "*In manus tuas, Domine, commendo animam meam.*" Shortly afterwards his corpse was dangling in chains, and the executioner passed to the other arm of the cross to execute Frà Domenico in the same way. This faithful disciple mounted rapidly, with a hopeful and almost joyous countenance, as though he saw the gates of heaven opening before him. After witnessing the death of both his companions, it was Savonarola's turn to fill the vacant place between them. He was so completely wrapped in spiritual contemplation, that he no longer seemed to belong to this earth. Nevertheless, when mounted on the cross he could not refrain from glancing at the multitude below, seemingly all hungering for the moment of his death. How different the days when this same people had hung rapturously on his words in Santa Maria del Fiore! At the foot of the cross he saw rough men with blazing torches already prepared eagerly waiting to fire the pile. Then he quickly bent his neck to the executioner. Not a sound was heard at that moment; there was a terrible silence. All the vast crowd, even the very buildings round the Piazza, seemed impressed by the general horror. Then a voice was heard crying: "O prophet, now is the time for a miracle!" Every incident of that day seemed fated to remain enduringly stamped on the public mind, as if to increase that mysterious sense of terror which the death of the prophet they had betrayed was to leave impressed for all time on the people of Florence.

Thinking to gratify the unbridled mob, the executioner began to play the buffoon with the still quivering form, and in so doing lost his balance and nearly fell. This disgusting spectacle aroused general indignation and horror, and the man was severely reprimanded by the

authorities. He then tried to hurry on his work, in the hope that the flames would reach the poor victim before life was quite spent. But the chain slipped from his grasp, and before he could recover it, Savonarola had drawn his last breath. He was forty-five years of age at the time of his decease: at 10 o'clock a.m., on the 23rd of May, 1498.[1]

The pile was already in flames before the executioner could descend the ladder to light it, for a man who had been impatiently waiting with a torch hastened to fire it, exclaiming: "At last I can burn the Friar who would have liked to burn me!"[2] But then a sudden wind arose and blew the flames away from the three corpses for some little time; whereupon many shrank back alarmed, crying aloud: "A miracle, a miracle!" But soon the wind dropped, the flames again rose round the bodies, and the crowd pressed forward once more. Meanwhile the cords binding Savonarola's arms being consumed, the blast of the fire caused his hands to move, so that to the eyes of the faithful, their master seemed to raise his hand on high from the midst of the flames, as though blessing the people who had doomed him to the stake.[3]

The Piagnoni pointed out this vision to one another, and many of them were so strongly moved by it, that without thinking where they were and in what company, they fell sobbing on their knees in adoration before him whom they already secretly worshipped as a saint. Their women wept aloud; their young men shuddered at the miserable state to which the city was reduced. But while there was bitter grief on one side, there was wild exultation on the other. The Arrabbiati congregated about the

[1] "Vita Latina," Burlamacchi, Pico, Barsanti, Frà Benedetto, Landucci, Nardi, and nearly all the Florentine historians of the period.

[2] This incident is related by Nardi, who witnessed its occurrence (i. p. 161).

[3] Burlamacchi, p. 162.

scaffold, employed a mob of boys to shout and dance and throw stones at the half-consumed victims, so that from time to time fragments of their corpses fell down into the fire. "It rained blood and entrails," says a writer who witnessed the horrible sight, which evoked cries of joy from Savonarola's foes, and redoubled the fruitless sobs and lamentations of his friends.[1]

Many of the more daring Piagnoni, including certain ladies disguised as serving-maids, forced their way through the hostile crowd to the scaffold, and in the general confusion succeeded in gathering some relics of their saints. But they were soon thrust back by the guards, for the Signory, fearing lest these ashes might have the power to work miracles, ordered them to be borne away in carts to the Old Bridge and cast into the Arno. Nevertheless they could not prevent the Piagnoni from devoutly collecting the remains left on the Piazza, or which fell by the way. These relics, carefully cherished and preserved in valuable caskets,[2] were worshipped by all the followers of the Friar, and for many years served to keep alive their faith in him and their devotion to his convent. That celebrated scholar and philosopher, G. F. Pico the younger, believed that he possessed a portion of Savonarola's heart recovered by himself from the Arno; and declared that he had found it endowed with miraculous powers for healing many maladies, exorcising evil spirits, and so forth.[3] Afterwards, numerous medals of the Friar were struck and engravings made of his portrait, and these were much sought after but carefully concealed by the devout, for now that the

[1] Frà Benedetto, "Cedrus Libani."

[2] These caskets generally resembled thick round snuff-boxes, with the portrait of Savonarola either painted or in low relief on the lid. They were provided with a false bottom under which the ashes were concealed.

[3] Pico, "Vita," &c., chap. xix. All the other biographers also mention hese relics.

PORTRAIT OF SAVONAROLA.

(*From a Medal.*)

Arrabbiati were masters in Florence, their insolent fury was not to be lightly braved.[1]

The same day, after the execution, the Ten wrote to Rome and the other Italian Courts, to the effect that "the friars had been put to death in the manner their pestiferous sedition deserved."[2] And the Apostolic Commissioners not only designated Savonarola as a heretic and schismatic, but dared to charge him with the crimes from which even the falsified depositions concocted by themselves had completely exonerated him. "We have discovered," they informed the Pope, "that he caused secrets of the confessional to be revealed to him, and that it was his purpose to excite sedition in Florence by breeding disputes among the citizens. We found this Friar, or, to avoid calling him either a friar or a man, we should rather say, this most iniquitous *omnipede*,[3] to be a mass of the most abominable wickedness. His disciple, Frà Domenico, dared to call God to witness in favour of his master's words and doctrines, declaring that if they were not true he would be content to die on the gibbet, and have his ashes scattered to the wind and rain. Wherefore, in condemning the three to capital punishment we arranged that this prediction should be fulfilled to the letter."[4]

The Signory received letters of approval and congratulation from Rome, Milan, and all the other Courts. France was the only exception; for Charles' successor, King Louis XII., wrote earnestly begging them to suspend the execution, for highly important reasons to be communicated in

[1] Nardi, "Storia di Firenze," i. 162 and fol.; Gio. Cambi, ii. 113 and fol. (in the "Delizie degli Eruditi Toscani," tom. xxi.); and *vide* all the other biographers also.

[2] Padre Marchese, doc. xxxix.

[3] Omnipedum nequissimum.

[4] This letter of the 23rd of May, 1498, was published among the Documents given by Meier, who had discovered it at Florence in the library of Count Boutourlin.

a following despatch.[1] But at the date of his letter, the 4th of June, the ashes of the three martyrs had long been dispersed in the Arno.

The Piagnoni were now subjected to, apparently, endless persecution. The convent of St. Mark's was closed to all outsiders for two months, deprived of the adjoining building of La Sapienza occupied by the novices, and robbed under various pretexts of the library collected by Lorenzo de' Medici, for which it had paid three thousand florins to the Republic;[2] while many other of its old rights and privileges were also taken away.[3] The hostility of the government even assumed the grotesque form of issuing no less than nine decrees against the big bell[4] of St. Mark's known as the Piagnona. As it was this bell that rang the alarm on the day of the riot, it was sentenced to banishment from Florence, brought out in a cart and publicly flogged by the executioner.[5] This business of the bell stirred the whole Dominican Order to more resentment than all the other persecutions combined.[6] Many of the brethren were sent into exile, among others Mariano degli Ughi, Roberto da Gagliano, Frà Girolamo's brother, Maurelio Savonarola, and even Malatesta Sacramoro, whose treachery had not availed to gain pardon for his former

[1] Padre Marchese, "Documenti," doc. xl., loc. cit., p. 192; Desjardins, "Négoc. Diplomat.," ii. 13.

[2] *Vide* the before-quoted biographers, and doc. xxxiv. in Appendix to the Italian edition of vol. i. of this work. *Vide* also Professor Piccolomini's excellent monograph on the "Libreria Medicea privata."

[3] As, for instance, the right of celebrating mass in the palace of the Signory, a privilege now transferred to the Friars of S. Miniato. St. Mark's was also deprived of the management of the society of the "Buoni Uomini di San Martino."

[4] The "Archivio delle Riformazioni" contains numerous letters and deliberations on this subject. A few of these are included in the Appendix to the Italian edition, doc. xxxii.

[5] Padre Marchese, "Storia di San Marco," in the "Scritti Varii," p. 272; Gherardi, p. 205 and fol.

[6] *Vide* many documents on this subject in Gherardi's published collection, p. 206 and fol.

friendship with his master. Meanwhile, by another official decree, the musicians of the Signory were sent to pay honour to Romolino by performing under his windows.[1]

Numerous citizens were also persecuted as followers of the Friar, and many publicly reprimanded and declared ineligible for office.[2] Many others were summoned to Rome, but quickly purchased exemption from the trouble of the journey by bribing Romolino, who also received large rewards from the Signory in the shape of handsome pieces of plate.[3] But the citizens could obtain no protection from the continued and lawless insults of the mob; they were deafened on all sides by offensive and indecent songs against the Piagnoni, and their devotions were continually interrupted. But the sorest of their afflictions was to find themselves universally shunned and to witness the baseness of learned men such as Ficino and Verino, who, after being enthusiastic for Savonarola, suddenly made him the object of ferocious attacks.[4] As a greater insult to his memory, the Arrabbiati let a wretched donkey loose in the

[1] *Vide* in Appendix to the Italian edition, doc. xxxi., the decrees of the Signory dating from the 27th of May to the 8th of June, and those of the 29th and 30th of June. *Vide* also Padre Marchese, "Storia di San Marco," p. 257 and fol.

[2] Cambi, ii. p. 182.

[3] Nardi, i. 163. By a decree of the 28th of May, 1498, the Signory paid the sum of 111½ broad gold florins for the silver given to Romolino, and a further sum of twenty-five to the reader of the sentence, "contra Fratrem Jeronimum Savonarolam et quosdam alios" (Gherardi, "Nuovi Documenti," p. 174).

[4] The violent "Apologia" addressed by Ficino to the Cardinal's College, is published in the "Giornale storico degli Archivi Toscani," vol. iii. p. 115; Verino's "Invettiva" is to be found in Gherardi, p. 197, preceded by two earlier writings by the same author in high praise of Savonarola. The "Invettiva" was written while Savonarola was in prison, and is worthy of note as containing a brief summary of the Friar's life, and proving that the only crime attributed to him by Verino, the real reason of the latter's sudden hostility was that of being no true prophet nor capable of performing miracles. Savonarola had dedicated his treatise on poetry to this same Verino, who now designates the master he had so recently revered, as far worse than a hypocrite.

Duomo on Christmas night, and then cudgelled it to death on the threshold.[1] Meanwhile those who remained most true to Savonarola devoted themselves to the secret composition of apologies, biographies, and poems in sanctification of his memory;[2] they studied his sermons, and awaited the fulfilment of his predictions, while strict orders came from Rome to the Convent of St. Mark, prohibiting all mention of him, or so much as the utterance of his name.[3] A few days after the execution some women were found at dawn in the Piazza kneeling in prayer on the stones where the three martyrs had been burnt.[4] And every year, on the night of the 23rd of May, flowers were found strewn on the same spot: the which pious practice was continued for more than two centuries, namely, down to the year 1703.[5]

[1] Cambi, "Storia di Firenze," vol. ii. p. 135.

[2] Numerous poems were composed both then and at a later time, in honour of Savonarola and even of his two fellow-martyrs. We append one that is preserved in the National Library, was first printed at Pistoia in 1847, and afterwards published by Padre Marchese, "Scritti Varii," pp. 259–260. It begins thus:—

La carità e spenta
Amor di Dio non c'è
Tepido ognun diventa;
Non ci e più viva fè.

* * *

Ohimè! chi il Santo e morto!
Ohimè! Signore, Ohimè!
Tu togliesti il Profeta
Il qual tirasti a te.

Translation.—Charity is extinct, love of God no more. All are lukewarm and without living faith. . . . Alas! the Saint is dead! Alas! O Lord! Alas! Thou hast taken our Prophet and drawn him to Thee.

Another of these hymns is given in Appendix to the Italian edition, doc. xxxiv.

[3] Gherardi, "Nuovi Documenti," p. 218 and fol.

[4] Landucci, "Diario," p. 178.

[5] *Vide* Gherardi, "Nuovi Ducumenti," pp. 243–244. This pious custom is also mentioned by many of the historians.

# CONCLUSION.

FTER Savonarola's death, so many rapid changes occurred in Florentine affairs, that the Arrabbiati had no time even to plan a restriction of the government; but, on the contrary, were soon forced to see that the Republic could only be saved by adopting the very policy advised by the Friar. For Piero and Giuliano de' Medici were already advancing on the city with a strong force of Venetian troops. Happily the Duke of Milan, in his increasing jealousy of Venice and distrust of the Medici, came forward to avert these perils. But what reliance could be placed in the friendship or good faith of Ludovico? As to Alexander VI., who had held out such lofty hopes, and been so lavish of his promises to Florence, in order to compass Savonarola's death, it was curious to see how completely he gave the rein to his passions, as soon as the wished-for end was attained. It almost appeared as though the death of the unfortunate Friar had removed the last shadow of restraint from the lust and ambition of the Pope and his son Cesare, Duke of Valentinois. He made an alliance with the Turks, and—a thing without precedent at that day—positively favoured the Jews, and put up to sale, in a single year, no less than twelve Cardinals' hats :[1]

[1] Guicciardini, "Storia d'Italia," Rosini edition, vol. iii. p. 15.

while as to the unnatural crimes, assassinations, and poisonings committed by father and son, their history is too well known for any details to be needed here. The Pope's chief aim was to carve out a State for his son in Romagna; and the Duke was so devoured by the same ambition, that he was already scheming to extend his power over the whole of Italy, and intended to gain possession of Tuscany as a preliminary step.[1] For this reason he was always eager to bring new dangers on the Republic: now rousing Arezzo to revolt, now threatening to re-establish Piero de' Medici in Florence, and continually harassing the frontier and making raids on the territory. Hence the Florentines were driven to pay him 36,000 ducats per year, nominally for his services as a general; but even this did not prevent him from occasionally finding a pretext for returning to pillage their lands. This was how the Borgia fulfilled their promises of rewarding the Republic for ridding them of Savonarola!

Accordingly the Arrabbiati were at last convinced that the only mode of defending Florence against these foes and the Medici was to make alliance with France and honest peace with the Piagnoni, whom they now ceased to persecute. No sooner did they begin to adopt the policy urged by Savonarola, and to which they had been so bitterly opposed, than affairs began to mend and soon went on with far greater tranquillity and success than might have been expected.

But unfortunately Louis XII. was no less ambitious than Charles VIII., and soon plunged Italy in the very calamities which Savonarola had foretold. We all know the history of the wars between Germans, Spanish, Swiss, and French, which ravaged our land for so many years, and made it a prey to pillage, fire, and bloodshed. So long as the French were victorious, the Florentine

[1] Machiavelli, "Principe," chap. viii.

Republic was able to struggle on in the midst of the general confusion; but when, on the death of the youthful hero, Gaston de Foix, fortune deserted the arms of France, the death knell of the liberty of Florence had already struck. For in the month of September, 1512, a Spanish army reinstated the Medici without encountering any resistance.

Meanwhile war and disaster were spreading in every part of Europe.

The voice of Martin Luther had already roused schism in the Church; and a regimen of stakes and gibbets, instead of healing the wound, only fortified the new doctrines and kindled religious wars. The Church, Italy, the whole world were under the scourge. And in every new battle-field, pillaged town or fresh heresy, the Piagnoni beheld another confirmation of Savonarola's prophecies. Thus misfortune and oppression only served to strengthen them in their old faith. And when Clement VII. ascended the Papal throne; when the Eternal City was besieged and sacked by the armies of Charles V.; when the churches became stables for horses and dens of vice; then it seemed, even to the incredulous, as though all the Friar's predictions were being literally fulfilled. His last prophetic words to Niccolini were brought forth, read and copied with great wondering, and circulated on all sides. Every one was poring over his sermons, and pointing out numerous passages in which the events now taking place had been repeatedly foretold. Suddenly, and as if by a miracle, the Piagnoni were again masters of the city; and the Medici, unaided from without, and encompassed by enemies within the walls, were again put to flight. The Republic was immediately proclaimed, Christ once more elected King of Florence, the citizen militia reorganized, while all the inhabitants were now resolved to maintain their restored freedom, or die a

worthy death in its defence. The resuscitated Republic succeeded in resisting many determined attacks, and we all know how its speedy fall was accomplished. But defended by the genius of Michelangiolo, the arm of Ferruccio and the heart of the whole people, its end was no less glorious than the heyday of its former prosperity. Also, during that wonderful defence, the Convent of St. Mark was again the headquarters of patriotism and freedom. The disciples of the Friar, his prophecies, his sermons, and his portraits inspired those valiant and great-souled citizens to fight for their Republic to the last. Thus the history of the true followers of Savonarola ends only with the downfall of Florentine freedom.[1]

As we have seen, the religious creed of the Piagnoni was invariably and strictly Catholic. Even when Rome was besieged by Protestant hosts, and the Florentine Republic warring against the deadly attacks of the Pope, the Piagnoni refused to coalesce with the followers of the Reformation, and indeed the few Protestants existing in Florence, among whom mention should be made of the

[1] The superstitious veneration in which Savonarola was held by the brethren of many Tuscan convents increased instead of diminishing as time went on. They worshipped his garments, addressed prayers to him, cherished his relics, wrote and re-wrote his life, with the frequent addition of new miracles, and celebrated services expressly composed in his honour, in which he was invoked as a martyred saint and prophet. Although these monks were not, strictly speaking, disciples of Savonarola, we will mention some of their writings. Two editions of an "Officio proprio per Frà Girolamo Savonarola" were published at Prato by Count Carlo Capponi, with a preface by Cesare Guasti, in 1861 and 1863. Another "Officio" discovered by Père Bayonne is given in Gherardi's "Nuovi Documenti," pp. 236–241 ("Officium B. B. Hieronymi, Dominici et Silvestri martyrum," &c.). Both were composed in the latter part of the sixteenth century.

But the followers of the Friar continued to be persecuted even in the sixteenth century. Duke Cosimo I. cherished great hatred against the brethren of St. Mark's chiefly on account of the veneration they still felt for Savonarola and his doctrines. He actually expelled them from the convent in 1545, but was soon forced to allow them to return at the instance of the Pope. *Vide* Gherardi, "Documenti," p. 225 and fol.

celebrated Antonio Brucioli,[1] were marks for the popular fury. This was undoubtedly another and most evident sign that Savonarola's doctrines were very different from those of Luther. Nevertheless there was an endless interchange of charges and counter-charges, and amid all this discussion the judgment of Italy remained long in suspense. Immediately after Savonarola's death, Pope Alexander issued the severest prohibition of his writings, commanding all who possessed them to hand them over to the archbishop under pain of excommunication. But, changing his mind later, he sanctioned their republication; and they were tolerated more or less down to the year 1558, when Paul IV. called upon the Congregation of the Index to subject them to minute and diligent inquiry. This led to a long and serious dispute. When the extracts selected by a commission of four Cardinals were read to the Pope, he fell into a great rage, and stamping his feet on the floor, exclaimed: "This is Martin Luther, this doctrine is pestiferous! What are ye doing, most reverend Monsignori?" But, on closer examination, the Pontiff himself was obliged to accept the evidence: accordingly the dialogue "On Prophetic Truth" and fifteen of the sermons were the only works *suspended*; all the rest being allowed to circulate freely.[2]

The followers of Savonarola therefore continued to profess themselves wholly and constantly Catholic; San Filippo Neri and Santa Caterina de' Ricci adored the Friar as a saint; Benedict XIV. judged him worthy of canonization;[3] and some of his works were even used

[1] Varchi, "Storia di Firenze," Arbib edition, vol. i. p. 580.

[2] *Vide* the "Discorso" pronounced on this occasion by Paolino Bernardini of Lucca, and afterwards published in Quétif's "Additiones" to Pico's "Vita di Frà Girolamo Savonarola," vol. ii. p. 559 and fol. *Vide* also a letter by Frà Vincenzo Ercolani of Perugia, published in the Appendix to Aquarone's "Biography of Savonarola," p. xxii. and fol.

[3] "De Servorum Dei beatificatione," vol. viii.

as reading and text-books for the Catholic schools.[1] And it is impossible for any one to read them without being firmly convinced that, to the day of his death, Savonarola remained unswervingly faithful to the dogmas of his faith; and that instead of seeking to destroy the unity of the Church, it was his constant desire to render it still more complete.[2]

Nevertheless, it cannot be denied that he had the spirit of an innovator, and indeed the main purpose of our work has been to insist on this point. Savonarola was the first to raise the standard announcing the uprisal of the truly original thought of the Renaissance at the close of the great epoch of humanistic learning. He was the first man of the fifteenth century to realize that the human race was palpitating with the throes of a new life, and his words were loudly echoed by that portion of the Italian people still left untainted by the prevalent corruption. He accordingly merits the title of the prophet of the new civilization. But to regard him as the leader of a party, a sect, or a system, is an error only to be committed by those unacquainted with the Friar and his times. The Renaissance must not be confounded with modern civilization to which it was only, as it were, the preliminary; for what general character it possessed was as yet vague and undefined. The men of that time justly deserving the title of

[1] His "Trionfo della Croce" was republished by the Propaganda Fide; his "Semplicità della Vita Cristiana" was translated by a Jesuit into French and republished in Paris in 1672; his "Confessionale" was frequently reprinted, with very slight alterations, and used as a Manual for confessors.

[2] Even in our own day an attempt has been made to claim Savonarola as one of the precursors of the Reformation, by placing his name on the monument of Martin Luther, erected at Worms in 1868. A French Dominican, Père M. Rouard, protested against this in a pamphlet in defence of Savonarola's orthodoxy, which was translated and published by Comm. C. Guasti in the "Rivista Universale, Annali Cattolici," vol. vi. Genoa and Florence, 1867.

innovators were those who foresaw the progress of civilization towards a vaster synthesis of the human race, and felt drawn nearer to God. Their hot blood burned like fever in their veins; their ideas changed with delirious rapidity: they were dominated by a superior force, impelling them across unknown seas to the discovery of unseen but truly imagined lands. Of these men Christopher Columbus was the veritable type and exponent. Rather than downright, genuine thinkers, they are champions of thought. It is useless to ask them what they seek and whither they go. They only know that they are pressing forward, and drawing the world after them in their course—nothing more. Nor should we wonder at their unconsciousness, for it is their essential characteristic and merit. They disperse the darkness, and cleave a passage for the new road, rather by force of will and faith, than by force of reason. Theirs is the prophetic mind, the hero's heart, the martyr's fate. The world, in fact, is horror-struck by this new race of Titans springing to the overthrow of old idols, and soon seeks to crush them, but before long begins to worship their traces and follow in their steps. Thereupon the Renaissance is replaced by modern civilization; the first synthetical idea disengaged by analysis opens the way to different schools and systems. Savonarola, Telesio, Campanella, and Bruno are succeeded by Galileo, Bacon, and Descartes, who come with the might of their genius to fertilize the soil and gather the harvest others have sown. But what could these supreme and tranquil intellects have effected if those other great and generous souls had not daringly rent the veil from the human mind; had not paved the way by their own martyrdom? Luther himself could scarcely have been so successful in inaugurating his Reform had not the sacrifice of Savonarola given a final proof that it was useless to hope in the purification of Rome, and that no attempt to reform the Church could

possibly succeed without destroying her unity, at least for a time.

The drama we have seen exemplified in Savonarola's life, spread abroad after his death, and became the drama of all Europe. In fact we behold the same struggle on all sides: as of two worlds met in conflict. One of the two is radiant with the splendours of art and science and wealth; but nothing avails to preserve its vitality, when its poets and scholars, statesmen and potentates are all corrupt to the core. Beside them, however, we see a handful of oppressed and persecuted men, firmly holding together, and forming, as it were, another society by their union: their language is rough, their reasoning faulty, their books uncultured; but the source of their inspiration is inexhaustible, for it springs from the heart, wherein throbs a living force that can never die, that feeds on itself, and derives new youth from danger and persecution. Individual men perish, it is true, but their blood generates thousands of followers; their ideas become the accepted creed of the human race, and are the main promoters of modern civilization. Society is renewed and redeemed by the courage and sacrifice of a few martyrs, it makes progress by dint of virtue and heroism; and we are forced to recognize that whenever the human race has to make some mighty stride on its unerring path, Providence unveils the sanctuary of truth not only to men of elevated mind and piercing intellect, but especially and above all to those of generous spirit and truest purity of heart.

Such was the character of the true Renaissance, and two Italians were the first to initiate it. Columbus discovered the paths of the sea, Savonarola those of the soul; when the one was mounting the pulpit, the other had already set sail, and was cleaving with daring prow the waves of an unknown deep. The latter, while believing

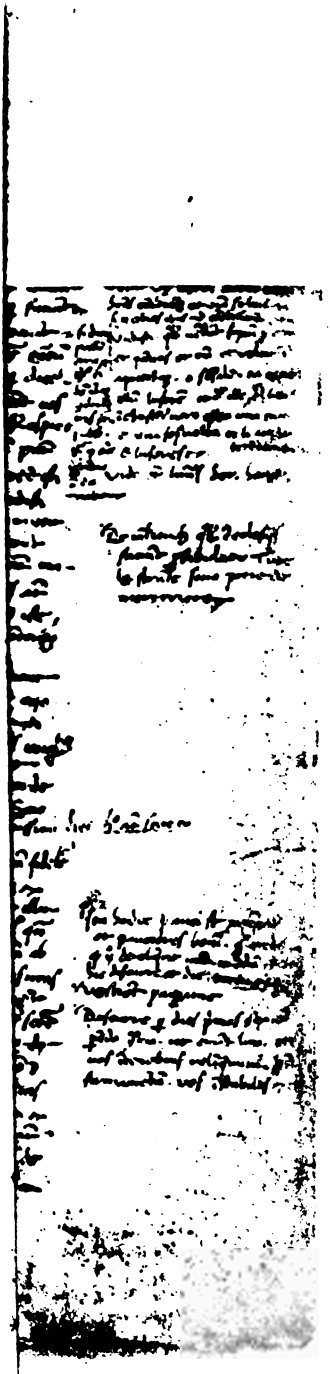
to have found a new track to India, had discovered America instead; the former believed that he had found the way to reawaken faith and reconstitute the religious unity of the human race, but his own martyrdom served to prove that his purpose could only be attained after passing through a period of schism and bloodshed. Both believed themselves sent by the Lord to diffuse Christianity on earth; both beheld strange visions which revived their ardour for the task; both touched a new world with their finger-tips, without being in a position to appreciate its immensity: the one was rewarded with chains, the other with death at the stake.

Accordingly, it were idle to inquire whether Savonarola upheld the *servum arbitrium* of Martin Luther or the Calvinistic doctrine of predestination! He embraced a far vaster if much less definite world; and although still shackled by the prejudices and superstitions of the past, looked to a more remote aim. He was the first, in his age, to urge humanity towards the goal that even, at this day, is still unattained, but towards which we are straining with redoubled effort. He endeavoured to conciliate reason with faith, religion with liberty. His work may be ranked with that of the Council of Constance, of Dante Alighieri, of Arnaldo of Brescia; he aspired to the reform of Christianity and Catholicism that has been the constant ideal of the greatest minds of Italy, and of certain leaders of thought in other parts of the civilized world.

When this reform, desired of all, and of which all recognize the need, shall be in course of realization, then Christianity, reanimated by faith, and fortified by reason, will attain to its true and perfect development in the world, and Italy will not be in the rear of the new march of progress. Then perhaps it will be clearly seen that had the Church of the fifteenth century hearkened to

Savonarola's voice, there would have been neither need nor call for a Reformation ; nor religion been opposed to reason and freedom. Then at last the life and character of the man who suffered martyrdom in this glorious cause will be justly appreciated by all.

FINIS.



# APPENDIX.

## INTERPRETATION OF THE FACSIMILE.

An Imperfect Summary of the Sermon delivered on the Second Sunday in Lent, 1491, to which Savonarola alludes as his "*terrificam predicationem.*" [1]

Dominica 2ª. in 40ª.

*Assumpsit Jesus* etc. Si sciretis quantum cogitavi antequam determinaverim que dicere volo etc. Testis est Deus, quia dubitavi me eum temptasse etc. (*a*) Tandem accidit mihi sicut Hyeremie. Dicam autem hystoriam que habet Hier., 19 et 20 c.° Dicta hystoria, dic ea que dicit Apostolus, p.° ad Cor., 10.

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(*a*) Dixi primo evangelium, declarando ad literam etc. Deinde ostendi qualiter Deus est virtus a quo omnis veritas, et quare homines non recipiebant veritatem, quod propter consuetudinem ut in capitulo Macthei (?) vel propter ea que habes in primo contra gentiles (?) etc. Ideo dixi custodiam etc. Deinde dixi qualiter fui coactus hec predicare, quia nihil aliud per totam noctem invigilem potuit mihi occurrere. Et posui quod fui sicut Ionas etc. Et dixi que habebam clara, et que non, etc. Deinde cetera etc.

[1] The autograph preserved in the Museum of St. Mark. At the beginning of this summary, on the inner margin of the MS., a writer of a later period has added the following words: "F. L. Vide totam hanc predicationem, in qua multe prophetie et alia." The sole reason for publishing these very rough and shapeless notes is that they are the only remains of a memorable sermon delivered during the life of Lorenzo de' Medici. In the original codex they occupy one side of sheet 57 and a few lines of sheet 58. The marginal notes and additions, likewise in Savonarola's hand, are placed at the foot of the page. Those having reference marks in the original are indicated by Latin letters, those without, by Greek letters at the end of the sentence to which they evidently refer.

Dicit propheta : *Reges eos in virga ferrea et tamquam* etc. Ecce coram senioribus et sacerdotibus sum, et dico vobis quod Dominus confringet hoc vas Italie, et presertim in hac parte. Ps. *Nisi conversi fueritis* etc. Dicit Dominus in Hier., et est figura nostri etc., *Ecce ego inducam afflictionem super locum istum, ita ut omnis qui audierit illam, tiniant aures eius, eo quod dereliquerunt me, et alienum fecerunt locum istum* etc. Primo sacrificant diis alienis. (β) Nam non Deo hodie fiunt officia, et ea que fiunt in ecclesia, sed pecunie. Qui episcopatum desyderat etc. Omnes volunt esse servi X[i], idest presbiteri et ecclesiastici, et certe est idolorum servitus etc. Omnes offerunt filios et sacrificant huic idolo etc., dantes beneficia etc. Omnes comedunt de carnibus istis, quia patres et familie pascuntur de patrimonio X[i] etc. Omnes libenter se obligant ad missas et officia, propter hoc etc. Ad vidas vadunt dicentes : facemus anniversarium etc. Pulcra officia faciunt, ut populus currat etc. Dicit sacrista : bene vendemus candelas etc. Pulsant campanas, quando est festum alicuius sancti etiam parvi etc. Si videtur, dic de crucifixo veteri etc. Vadunt illi pro barone sancto Ant.° etc. (γ) Inveniunt nova altaria et virgines marias etc. Confessores spaciant etc. Ordinantur omnes dummodo offerant etc. (δ) Nihil est nullum donum Spiritus Sancti, est nulla gratia que obtineri non possit pecunia etc. Pauperes solum opprimuntur. (ε)

Vobis ergo divitibus hoc dicit Dominus. *Ve vobis optimates* etc. *Aures* etc. Vidisti frater, dicit Dominus, oppressiones populi istius. Ecce autem gravetias : pauper portat saculum pecunie, et dives unum aureum, et dicit : dame el resto etc. Vidisti quia magni divites parvum habent onus, et qui non potest vivere nihil etc. Vidisti, eos qui dicuntur spirituales suadere alios ad hoc, et laudare etc. ; et dicunt : ego nihil accipio etc. ; tanto fa colui che tiene etc. Non

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(β) Dicunt beata quella casa che ha una chierechata. Sed veniet tempus quando aportebit dicere : guai etc. Si amas filios, fa'a mio modo, non lo far prete ; necabitur etc. Melior erit conditio aliorum filiorum tuorum etc. Al fil della spada etc.

(γ) De cerretanis diversis.

(δ) Etiam imberbes.

(ε) Qui vadunt ad monasteria mala intentione etc. Qui non satisfaciunt legatis piis, sub pena etc.

Volunt casus conscientie. Doceo cito habeas contritionem, et omnia solvis ; quia si nescies, ibis ad confessorem. Et si dicis : possum errare ; respondeo : si habes veram contritionem. . . . Respondeo, quod tunc ignorantia non damnabit etc.

solum qui faciunt etc. Vidisti qualiter unus habet de reditu quinquaginta, et solvit centum etc. Vidisti quia imponunt onus ad beneplacitum suum, et dictum suum pro facto ponunt. (ζ) Cum enim dicunt : tu habes tantum divitiarum, ergo solves tantum, dicunt est verum. Et venit vera opinio illorum philosophorum qui dicebant : omne quod vestrum est etc. (η) Vidisti quod cum vidue vadunt ad eos, flendo etc., dicunt : vos debebatis dormire etc. Vidisti quando pauperes dolent, dicunt : paga paga etc. Respice quanta pecunia colligitur, et ubi est etc. Respice quot pauperes, quot puelle ! non possunt supplere illi de Sancto Martino etc. Vidisti quot mala faciunt in nocte isti ; et ille interficit unum et facit fugere alium, pro se etc. Ad puellas vadunt etc. Vidisti fetentes sodomitas eos qui habent coniuges, in apotecha in cubiculo in tenturio etc., mittit pro puero. Fatorinis suis etc. (*a*) Pauperes ergo audite me. Isti qui vos opprimunt gaudent in verbis meis, quia interim ego vos hortor ad patientiam, et ipsi habent maiorem audatiam. Estote patientes, sufferte, expectate, Deum etc. Ad vos autem divites dico : *Ecce inducam afflictionem* etc., ut supra. Non vocabitur locus iste Florentia, sed turpitudo et sanguis etc.,[1] et spelunca latronum etc. Frange Domine, proice in torrentem lagunculam texteam etc. (*b*)

Multi derident, percuciunt Hyeremiam, et in nervum ponunt, ne loquatur etc. Sed oportet quod dicat, quia Dominus vult etc. O sacerdotes, nomen vestrum mutabitur in pavorem etc. Ecce, Domine, ego dixi. Dicam ergo *Seduxisti me Domine, et seductus sum : fortior me fuisti et invaluisti : factus sum in derisum tota die ; omnes subsanant*

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(ζ) Vidisti qualiter vendunt saxum pro cera, et pannos et omnia, et reducunt (?) ad apotecham. O sensale, tu excitas illum lusorem. Et dicit ille : Ee bono inchostro ? nero quanto una mora e una sopravolta ; ti li acquista etc. : te renderà tutto. Et lusores etc.

Vide etiam literas Sor. Horet.

(η) Multi sequuntur mulieres ; infamant quando nolunt ; sequuntur per iram ; literas scribunt etc.

(*a*) De mulieribus qualiter in ecclesiis faciunt postribula etc. Tute le strade sono piene de meretrice etc.

(*b*) Vultis signum ? Et quia omnes iniusti raptores etc., ideo, iusto Dei iudicio, ognun ha da fare, et nullus felix in hac urbe : ut qui aliis estis molesti, quomodo permittet Deus ipse quod quiescatis et componere queatis statum vestre domus ? Nemo erit, immo omnes eritis pauperes vel saltem infelices. Hec dico quia omnes conqueruntur, et dicunt se esse in necessitatibus.

[1] Here another hand has written on the margin : "Nota hic diligenter."

*me. Quia iam olim loquor, vociferans iniquitatem, et vastitatem clamito: et factus est sermo Dei mihi in obprobrium et in derisum tota die. Et dixi: non recordabor eius, nec loquar ultra in nomine eius. Et factus est sermo Dei in corde meo quasi ignis extuans claususque in ossibus meis; et defeci, ferre non substinens* etc. Scio ergo deridere multos. Ego autem clamo, die et nocte: *Tu exurgens* etc. Sunt novissimi dies, hoc autem scite etc.

Recordamini quando X^s^ venit mundum renovare, invenit solum in toto orbe Iudeam fidelem, in qua etiam pauci. Quid fecit? Oculte (quia alii non erant digni) aliquos duxit in montem etc.: et hoc erat figura quod multos ad magnum statum conducere, et sol aperiretur eis, et illuminarent totum mundum etc.; reprobatis pravis iudeis et afflictis etc. (*c*) (*d*) Nota. ergo quando istos videbis, ut cognoscere possis: puto quod non sit magnum tempus etc. Primo videbis eos omnia abnegare, et vitam pro X^o^ exponere. Non acceptabunt munera, non elemosinas, nisi quottidianum victum. (*e*) Non congregabunt, non edificabunt, non querent amicitias magnorum. Veridici etc. Et post sex dies, idest postquam omnia corporalia trascenderint, fixi in fide Sancte Trinitatis, ducentur in montem contemplationis magne, seorsum et secreto loco. (ϑ) Non enim discurrent. Non erunt tota die in visitationibus mulierum, et dare coronas et figuras non civium non magnorum, non in palatio dominorum. Non in . . . querendo etc. Et transfigurabitur X^s^ ante eos. Nam multas habebunt revelationes etc., et scientiam novi et veteris testamenti. Non in questionibus Scotti etc., non per commenta So^rum^, nec in vanitate versuum, nec in pompa, sed de cisterna propria etc. Maxime autem loquentem

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(*c*) Respice hystorias antiquas. Quando misit diluvium quosdam reliquit etc. Quando mundus erravit, Habraam elegit etc. In libro Iudicum quosdam suscitavit. David de post secantes (?) etc. Et ita discurre per generationem et generationem etc. Nec potest aliter relevari ecclesia nam destruere et non edificare etc. Nunc autem adhuc non venit antichristus. Oportet ergo per mundum predicare etc. Quia ergo vos reliquistis me, ecce formo mihi alios viros tales etc.

(*d*) Ita hodie pauci sunt X̄piani, et pauciores boni. Ergo credes quod Y^s^ dereliquerit mundum etc. Et hic discurre et dic *Tu exurgens* etc.

(*e*) vestient pauperime.

(ϑ) Discurre per dies primos sex, comparando contraria ut erunt lux; et vos in tenebris relinquemini. Ipse firmamentum, vos instabiles etc.

audient Scripturam de excessu $Y^s$, portabuntque hoc in corde semper, eruntque de illis quibus dictum est *Pone me ut signaculum* etc. Expone de eis diligenter totum etc. Et ecce isti in tali contemplatione vellent stare cum Deo etc. Predicator debet habere has conditiones quod opere impleverit que dicit ; quod Deo omnia tribuat ; quod oratione populi credat habere sermonem ; quod indigniorem populo se existimet ; quod necessitate loquatur ; quod eos felices putet qui quiescunt etc. Isti erunt tales, sicut et sponsa dicebat : *Ecce tu pulcher es* etc., cui respondit : *Ego flos* etc. Ideo nubes lucida etc. Quia a tanta dulcedine cessabunt etc., et cadent suscipientes preceptum. Et dicet Pater : *Hic est Filius meus dilectus* etc. Et sic non videbunt nisi $Y^m$, quia omnia alia pro nihilo reputabunt, semper ipsum habentes in memoria et predicantes, et dicentes cum apostolo : *Quoniam Iudei signa petunt* etc. Discipulique moniti, non dixerunt visionem, nisi post resurectionem, quando scilicet apparebat gloria $X^l$, et omnia impleta. Ita, quando hoc videbitis, intelligetis que dico. Nunc autem intelligere non potestis etc. Solum oportet nunc orare etc.

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